



2020 BUDGET STATEMENT

ARHEN WELCOMES BUSH HEALTH BUDGET BOOST

7 October 2020 - Budget initiatives to boost health and trial innovative approaches to improving care for millions of people living in the bush were welcomed today by peak body the Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN).

“The \$50.3 million expansion of the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program (RHMTTP) again highlights the long term success of this program in providing the support so vital to ensuring nursing and allied health students can train for a future living and working in rural and remote communities,” ARHEN Board Chair Prof Lisa Bourke said.

“The funding of an additional University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), in either central Queensland or the south west Goldfields region of WA, will take the total number of UDRHs around the country to 17.

“This is a further endorsement of the work UDRHs have been doing for 20 plus years to address health workforce challenges in these communities, while also contributing to regional economies.”

UDRHs offer a range of innovative learning opportunities for health students through clinical placements, including in aged care, disability, mental health and rehabilitation.

The new UDRH and other Budget initiatives follow the recent evaluation of the RHMTTP:

- new health professional training opportunities in five remote communities (in Qld, NSW, SA, WA & NT) which will draw on UDRH expertise. This initiative will also require additional high quality student accommodation, also providing local jobs in construction and through the future health workforce
- a further five new projects to enhance training in aged care facilities for health students (in Qld, NSW, SA, WA & NT), again using UDRH expertise.

ARHEN looks forward to information about how trial sites will be chosen.

Another initiative will test new ways of getting health care to smaller, connected rural communities through a coordinated approach involving GPs, nurses and other health providers. The Rural Health Commissioner’s role will be broadened to include this trial, which will inform a broader roll out across Australia.

“We will continue to work closely with Department of Health officials and the RHC so that UDRH experience, expertise and feedback informs these processes and contributes to their success,” Prof Bourke said.