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MEDIA RELEASE

New University Department of Rural Health for Central Queensland

The Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN) welcomes the announcement today by the Australian Government that James Cook University will establish a new University Department of Rural Health in Central Queensland.

The Minister for Regional Health, Dr David Gillespie MP, said the new academic centre would be based in Emerald and focus on growing and supporting the local nursing and allied health workforce.

ARHEN Board member and James Cook University academic, Professor Sabina Knight AM, led the successful bid to establish the new centre.

Professor Knight said she looked forward to providing more training opportunities for health students in Emerald and the surrounding regions.

“Rural and remote health is a very rewarding field where your work makes a real difference to the health and wellbeing of people in your community” Professor Knight said.

“Research shows that health students who undertake a training placement in a rural or remote community and are exposed to all that life in the regions has to offer, are more likely to work in these communities after graduation.

“James Cook University looks forward to working with local health, aged care, disability and Indigenous health organisations to train and retain more health professionals in the Emerald region” Professor Knight said.

ARHEN Chair, Christine Howard, also welcomed the announcement and thanked the Australian Government for the further investment in the rural and remote health training system.

“For more than twenty years, the University Departments of Rural Health have provided a vital academic presence in rural and remote communities and helped to introduce thousands of health students to rural and remote practice across Australia.

Australian Rural Health Education Network
Leading Australian rural and remote health education and research

“Today’s announcement brings to 17 the number of University Departments of Rural Health across the country and represents another positive step towards improving health outcomes in rural and remote regions.

“ARHEN thanks the Australian Government for its ongoing support for the University Departments of Rural Health and its commitment to growing the rural and remote health workforce” Mrs Howard said.

Background

ARHEN is the national association and peak body for the University Department of Rural Health based in rural and remote locations across Australia. ARHEN’s purpose is to improve rural and remote health outcomes by delivering high quality health education, research and advocacy.

The University Departments of Rural Health are funded by the Australian Government under the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. Each year, around 15,000 nursing, midwifery and allied health students are supported by the University Departments of Rural Health to undertake a training placement in a rural or remote community.

The [2020 independent evaluation](#) of the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program recommended that additional University Departments of Rural Health be established in Central Queensland as well as the south-west and Goldfields regions in Western Australia.

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The ARHEN Chair, Christine Howard and Professor Sabina Knight from James Cook University are available for interview.