

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, 8 December 2023 7:37 PM

To: AHPRA Consultation <AHPRAConsultation@ahpra.gov.au>

Subject: Support for the Recognition of Rural Generalist Medicine as a Distinct Specialty

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8/12/23

Executive Officer – Medical

AHPRA
GPO Box 9958
Melbourne Victoria 3001
Australia

Subject: Support for the Recognition of Rural Generalist Medicine as a Distinct Specialty

I am writing to you with 37 years of experience as a rural doctor, having dedicated my career to providing comprehensive medical care in [REDACTED], a small rural town classified as MMR 5. My experience spans across obstetrics, trauma, emergency, and inpatient care, uniquely positioning me to understand the intricacies and challenges faced in rural healthcare. I am advocating for the recognition of Rural Generalist Medicine as a distinct specialty, a move I believe is essential for the advancement of healthcare in Australia's rural communities.

Rural Generalist Medicine, in its essence, is vastly different from urban medical practice. The scope of practice is broader and more diverse, often requiring a single practitioner to possess a wide range of skills to meet the varied health needs of the community. In rural settings, doctors are not only primary care providers but also the first point of contact in emergencies, trauma, and specialized care areas like obstetrics anaesthetics and surgery. This multifaceted role is not just a matter of

professional capability but a necessity borne from the geographical isolation and limited resources typical of rural areas.

The distinct nature of Rural Generalist Medicine also lies in the unique challenges it presents - from the higher prevalence of certain health issues, such as chronic diseases and farm-related injuries, to the socio-economic factors that influence health outcomes in rural communities. These factors necessitate a tailored approach to medical education and practice, one that is currently not adequately addressed under the broader umbrella of general practice medicine.

Recognizing Rural Generalist Medicine as a distinct specialty will have several positive implications:

1. **Specialized Training and Education:** It will encourage the development of targeted training programs that equip future rural doctors with the diverse skill set required in these settings. This includes not just clinical skills but also an understanding of the socio-economic and cultural factors that impact rural healthcare.
2. **Enhanced Recruitment and Retention:** A formal recognition will elevate the status and appeal of Rural Generalist Medicine, aiding in the recruitment and retention of doctors in rural areas. It acknowledges the complexity and importance of the role, which can be a significant factor in attracting new practitioners.
3. **Improved Healthcare Outcomes:** Specialization leads to better healthcare outcomes. Doctors trained specifically in Rural Generalist Medicine will be better equipped to address the unique challenges of rural healthcare, ultimately improving the health and wellbeing of rural communities.
4. **Research and Development:** This recognition can spur focused research and development in rural health issues, leading to innovations tailored to the needs of these communities.

My decades of experience have shown me the resilience and dedication of rural healthcare professionals. However, it has also highlighted the gaps that can only be bridged by acknowledging and developing Rural Generalist Medicine as a distinct field. I urge the Australian Medical Council to consider this proposal for the benefit of not just rural healthcare practitioners but the communities we serve.

Thank you for considering this important matter. I am available for further discussion and to provide any additional insights that can support this cause.

Sincerely,

Dr Steve Holmes
MBBS FFRCPA DRANZCOG FACRRM GAICD
Rural Generalist [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]