



Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding

Submission Number: 36
Name: Department of Rural Health, University of Sydney
Date Received: 31/10/2023

From: [Vicki Flood](#)
To: [Submissions - Healthcare Funding Inquiry](#)
Subject: Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding
Date: Tuesday, 31 October 2023 2:38:02 PM

Dear Mr Mullane

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Terms of Reference for the Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding.

There are ongoing, large-scale disparities in health outcomes and inequities in service access between people living in our cities and those in regional and remote regions. The situation is exacerbated by chronic rural health workforce shortages, and the unequal impacts on rural populations of the social and environmental determinants of health, which have become a global challenge.

Both Federal and State governments have attempted to address the health workforce inequities with substantial funding channelled into rural health (largely medical) workforce training schemes, infrastructure and, in NSW, a hub and spoke model of service.

The University of Sydney has historically made a strong commitment to improving health outcomes and health workforce training in rural NSW, including by establishing and operating two of the first Federally funded University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH), in Broken Hill in 1996 and in Lismore in 2001, and one of the first Rural Clinical Schools (RCS) in Dubbo in 2001. The separate Australian Government programs supporting UDRHs, RCSs and rural dentistry training were brought together in 2016 through the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) program which now also includes Regional Training Hubs focused on rural junior doctor training.

In considering the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry with a rural health lens and drawing on our expertise in this field, we recommend:

F	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion of purposeful planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce across all levels of engagement, training and health service delivery.• Particular attention to support the rural health workforce, including consideration of social infrastructure and capacity building to attract and retain staff in rural and remote locations.
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement with universities, and in particular in relation to rural education and training, through their University Departments of Rural Health, Rural Clinical Schools and Regional Training Hubs in relation to health workforce pathways and training.• Attention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

	development.
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With attention to evaluation and implementation of the new models of care. This may include evaluation and delivery of innovative digital health solutions.

I trust this is helpful and please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Vicki Flood

Vicki Flood | Professor | PhD MPH APD FNSA
Head of Rural Clinical School, Northern Rivers
Director, University Department for Rural Health, Northern Rivers |
Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney

University Centre for Rural Health
education research workforce

We work in close collaboration with a breadth of tertiary institutions, the local health district, primary health and community partners.

61 Uralba Street Lismore | NSW | 2480



I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I work and live – the Widjabal-Wiyabal people of the Bundjalung nation – and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.