

19 June 2024

Rural doctors welcome next National Rural Health Commissioner

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has welcomed the appointment of experienced rural doctor and health academic, Professor Jenny May AM, as the next National Rural Health Commissioner.

Professor May (pictured right) will replace outgoing Commissioner, Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart, on completion of her second term in the role.

“Like Ruth, Jenny will bring a wealth of real world experience to her new role, having worked as a doctor in multiple locations across rural and remote Australia – and also at a remote Indigenous community in Canada – in a rural medical career spanning more than 35 years” **RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski, said.**



“Jenny is currently Director of the University of Newcastle’s Department of Rural Health, and has been actively involved in rural health policy – particularly health workforce policy – for decades.

“She has also been right on the frontline of training the next generation of rural and remote doctors.

“Jenny has been RDAA’s long-term nominee to the Council of the National Rural Health Alliance, served as the Alliance’s Chair, and has chaired the Commonwealth’s National Medical Workforce Reform Advisory Committee.

“She also served as Chair of RDAA’s Female Doctors Group for many years, and holds Fellowships of both the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) and Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

“Jenny received our Telstra RDAA Rural Doctor of the Year Award in 2014, and a Member of the Order of Australia medal in 2016 – both highly deserved recognition of her significant service to Rural Medicine, rural healthcare and medical education.

“We warmly congratulate Jenny, and look forward to working closely with her in her new role.”

Dr Lewandowski paid tribute to Adjunct Professor Stewart, saying she had made a significant and lasting impact during her time as Commissioner.

“Ruth’s many achievements include progressing implementation of the National Rural Generalist Pathway, an initiative that promises to help deliver a new generation of doctors with a wide range of advanced skills to rural and remote communities into the future” **he said.**

“She has also been actively involved in the development of the Ngayubah Gadan Consensus Statement on rural and remote multidisciplinary health teams – a national consultative process designed to develop strong and

sustainable rural and remote healthcare teams by utilising all types of rural health professionals to their full scope of practice.

“Ruth’s most recent work focused on helping to ensure the sustainability of rural and remote maternity services into the future, an initiative that will benefit rural and remote mothers, babies and families for many years to come.

“We thank Ruth enormously for all she has achieved in her time as Commissioner.”

Dr Lewandowski said RDAA looks forward to working with Professor May on numerous issues, including:

- Continuing to progress implementation of the National Rural Generalist Pathway, given its importance to the future delivery of healthcare in rural and remote Australia.
- A project that RDAA is leading to review Medicare item numbers that are currently limited to Consultant Specialists, to assess if these Medicare items also sit within the scope of practice of Rural Generalist doctors – this has potential to extend the provision of more Medicare-rebated services to patients of Rural Generalist doctors.
- Work being undertaken by ACRRM and the RACGP on the recognition of Rural Generalist Medicine within the specialty of General Practice by the Australian Medical Council and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra).
- Strengthening rural and remote maternity services – rural and remote women need to be able to give birth close to home and also have choice with regards to their preferred models of maternity care.
- Exploring the expansion and strengthening of GP and non-GP Specialist training in the regions. There is so much potential and opportunity for medical students and young doctors to receive excellent training from those GPs, Rural Generalists and non-GP Specialists who work outside the capital cities and large regional centres, yet this remains untapped at the moment.

Photo: [Professor Jenny May](#)

Photo: [Dr RT Lewandowski](#)

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