



JAMES COOK
UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA

Making Rural Health Matter

*Successfully producing health
professionals who serve our regional,
rural and remote communities.*



Who we are

James Cook University (JCU) is committed to addressing the shortage of health professionals in regional, rural and remote Australia by developing a skilled, fit-for-purpose workforce through the College of Medicine and Dentistry.

The College is delivering work-ready graduates to meet the needs of rural, remote and regional Australia. In addition to offering a selection of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, we deliver General Practice training and collaboratively provide integrated career pathways for junior doctors to specialise in our region.

Together with our partners, we provide an integrated training pipeline by aligning our undergraduate medical education with medical specialty training to produce a workforce committed to our communities. Socially accountable education and training opportunities enable the delivery of immediate and high-quality care to people. A particular focus is on those adversely affected by the disproportionate distribution of healthcare in Australia.

Building tomorrow's rural and regional health workforce today

Our commitment to socially accountable health professional education means understanding the needs of the communities we serve and orienting our service, education and research to their priority needs. Ongoing, genuine connections between our people, our programs and the communities they serve are vital to JCU's work in training fit-for-purpose health professionals for the region.

Rural placements are a core component of educating JCU's medical, dentistry and pharmacy students, providing hands-on experience while nurturing an interest in meeting the needs of underserved communities.

For our medical program, the connection with community starts with recruiting values-aligned medical students who are drawn to rural careers. This commitment is strengthened during 20 weeks of rural and remote clinical placements during undergraduate training, through their junior doctor years in the hospital, to postgraduate specialist training in general practice, rural generalism or other medical pathways.

Helping Close the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

Education and initiatives aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equity are a priority for the College.

By working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, services and organisations we are producing health professionals who are trained to deliver culturally safe care. We aim to work together to deliver a sustainable workforce across disciplines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, but also to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals across the region. Working closely with Aboriginal and Islander Community Controlled Health Services, peak bodies and professional organisations in education, service and research activities is vital for achieving this goal.

Researching a healthier future for the Tropics

JCU extends its commitment to the health of regional, rural and remote communities through a range of locally-relevant, innovative research initiatives. Through centres of excellence, College-led research projects, and institutes, we are discovering solutions to the health issues of most importance to tropical Australia. JCU's Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM) spans public health, biomolecular, clinical, translational, and health systems research.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Education, including Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy degrees, generates locally-relevant evidence that strengthens healthcare for regional, rural and remote communities of tropical Australia. Through the generation of quality HDR research about patient and community health, we help strengthen community and industry partnerships, and help to transform health care. Our HDR candidates and their supervisors also deepen industry partnerships with health and hospital services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

A unique medical training pathway – from student to specialist

Undergraduate

1 Recruitment

Recruiting regional, rural, remote, and values-aligned students through a specialised selection process.

JCU

2 Rural experience

Providing rural experience through RHMT-funded rural clinical schools and student placement subsidy.

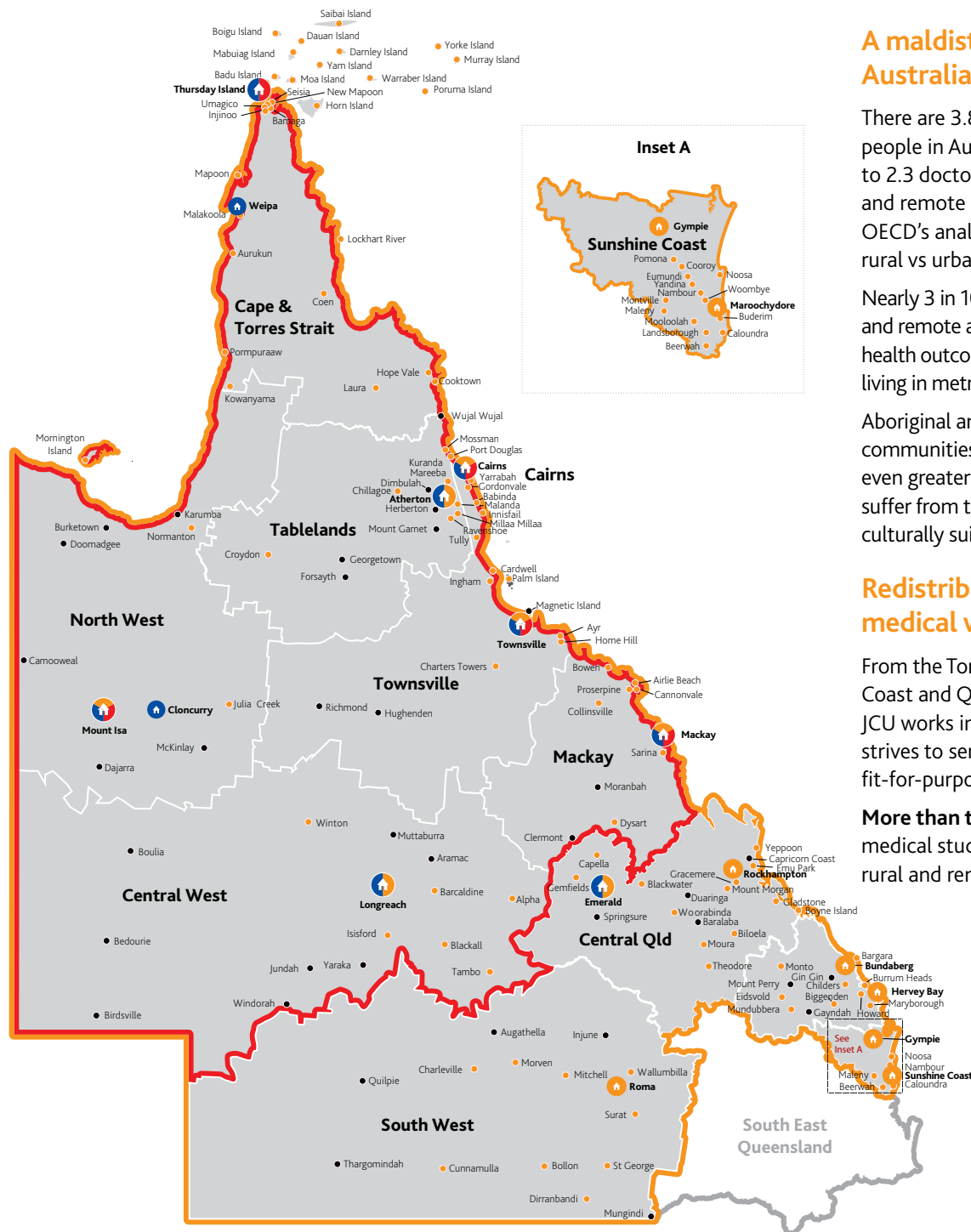
RCS RTH UDRH

3 Work-ready

Graduating work-ready Doctors, Dentists, Pharmacists and other health professionals to join the workforce.

JCU

Improving health outcomes in our region



A maldistribution of Australia's doctors

There are 3.8 doctors per thousand people in Australia's cities, compared to 2.3 doctors per 1,000 in rural and remote areas, according to the OECD's analysis of physician density, rural vs urban areas, in 2019.

Nearly 3 in 10 Australians live in regional and remote areas and often have poorer health outcomes compared to people living in metropolitan areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in these areas experience even greater health disparities and suffer from the lack of a technically and culturally suitable health workforce.

Redistributing the medical workforce

From the Torres Strait to the Sunshine Coast and Queensland's south-west, JCU works in and with the regions it strives to serve through an enhanced, fit-for-purpose health workforce.

More than two-thirds of JCU's medical students are from regional, rural and remote communities.

Early Career

4 Intern

Doctors continue through a specialised training pipeline, linked up with intern opportunities through NQORTH, facilitated by JCU.

RTH JFPDP

5 Training

JCU through NQORTH maps specialist training pathways for clinicians in NQ, attracting junior doctors and supervisors to live, train and work.

QLD HEALTH RTH

6 Workforce

JCU recruits and trains doctors to be specialist GPs through the JCU GP training program with placements across 90% of regional, rural and remote Queensland.

AGPT

Our connected training network

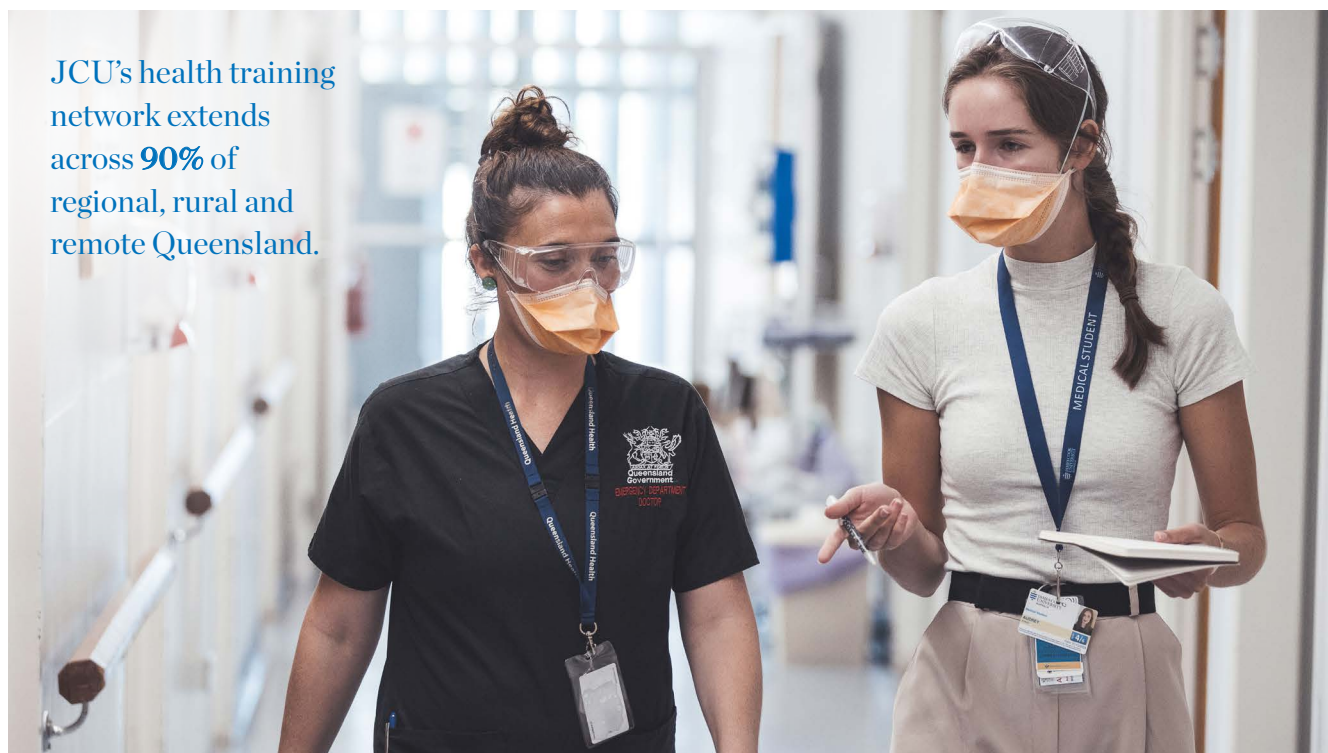
JCU's health training network extends across 90% of regional, rural and remote Queensland, with hands-on training opportunities for clinical placements in underserved communities.

JCU partners with hospital and health services, primary and allied health care clinics, and Aboriginal Medical Services to ensure students, registrars and specialists across the health disciplines have extensive rural experience in communities that need them most.

The Australian Government Department of Health's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) program has enhanced the University's ability to train health professionals in, with and for communities. The funding powers the University's eight Rural Health Sites, dotted across the state in areas of need. They can be found in Thursday Island, Weipa, Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Longreach, with larger Clinical Schools in Cairns, Townsville and Mackay.

Added to this is the Regional Training Hubs initiative established as a component of the Integrated Rural Training Pipeline for Medicine. This funding has allowed JCU to strengthen its partnership with hospital and health services in northern Queensland through the creation of Northern Queensland Regional Training Hubs (NQRTH). Through NQRTH we provide an integrated pathway connecting medical students and junior doctors with opportunities to train as specialists in Cairns, Central West, Mackay, North West, Torres and Cape, and Townsville.

Another critical component of the medical training network is the Australian General Practice Training program which enabled the expansion of our footprint through the JCU General Practice program to include 13 regional training offices from the Sunshine Coast to Thursday Island with more than 360 accredited GP training practices.



JCU's health training network extends across **90%** of regional, rural and remote Queensland.

Specialist



Our impact, now and into the future



James Cook University is aligning undergraduate medical education with medical specialty training to create a pipeline that strengthens the provision of a sustainable health workforce for regional, rural and remote Queensland.

The evidence is clear; while the initial costs are higher, regionally-based programs are vastly more effective in delivering rural workforce outcomes, and ultimately better health and prosperity for regional communities.

In aligning the training pipeline from regional medical school to a rural GP career, JCU's unique joined-up training model is making an impact.

Around 70 per cent of our students come from rural, regional or remote backgrounds⁴. Three-quarters of JCU Medicine graduates 'go rural' after graduation, and almost half of our graduates are now generalist practitioners.

JCU graduates represented **40% of recent health graduates** working in outer regional, remote and very remote Queensland.¹

JCU GP registrars are working in **76 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical services** across Queensland.²

JCU has produced **674 GP Fellows**, 64 per cent of whom are retained in the broader JCU training region.³

Two-thirds of JCU's pharmacy graduates are working in regional, rural and remote areas.⁴

Approximately 75% of graduate dentists working in Queensland Health rural facilities are JCU graduates.⁵

¹ Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2016-2020. ² AHPRA 1.10.2021.

³ Australian Journal of Rural Health 2020;28:462-468. ⁴ JCU Student Management System. ⁵ KBC Australia, Independent Evaluation of the RHMT Program for the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Working together for a healthier future

JCU is dedicated to improving the health of our region through the provision of a fit-for-purpose workforce and research to discover solutions to health issues. We work together with communities and partners to understand the need and effectively deliver on the investment by government to improve health outcomes. It is important that continued and future investments provide training, resources and infrastructure to do this.





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The future workforce

Undergraduate courses: Nurturing a passion for rural health



Lachlan Colledge

JCU Medicine student

"My JCU placements have made me think about the interconnectedness of rural and remote communities. I want to be the kind of doctor who builds relationships with their patients and gets involved in the community."



Tegan Stark

JCU Pharmacy graduate

"Having access to care and services, as close to home as possible, makes such a great difference in patients' lives. To do this we need to build a sustainable health workforce in regional and rural communities. That's what JCU is doing."



Lovjeet Kalkat

JCU Dentistry graduate

"The experiences gained have not only enhanced my clinical skills but have also enabled me to learn, grow, as well as strive to reach my full potential as a dentist. I will look to do my part in serving members in the local, rural community to provide essential dental health services."

JCU GP Training: Training in a rural community



Dr Natalia Anderson

JCU GP Registrar, Emerald

"There's such a broad scope of practice as a rural GP and you get really involved in a wide range of cases and skills training. It is such a supportive environment to learn and develop as a doctor and you can feel that the community is very keen to keep you here."

NQTH: Providing a reason to stay



Dr Helen Buschel

JCU Medicine Alumnus and Paediatric Surgery Trainee

"I am very passionate about training in North Queensland. Everyone works together and supports each other, and the lifestyle is fantastic. If I hadn't gone to Townsville there is no way I'd be doing what I am today."