

A large, textured red heart is the central focus of the page. It is surrounded by several yellow, five-pointed stars of varying sizes. The text "heart & soul" is overlaid on the heart. "heart" is in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. "&" is in a yellow, lowercase, sans-serif font. "soul" is in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

heart  
& soul

Strategic Directions  
2011 - 2015

© Lyn Poole, CEO, Rural Doctors Workforce Agency 2010  
ISBN 978-0-9870475-0-2

Rural Doctors Workforce Agency  
Heart and Soul Strategic Directions 2011-2015

The author reserves copyright in this publication. It may be reproduced in whole or in part for study or training purposes in various formats subject to the inclusion of an acknowledgement of the source. Reproduction for purposes other than those indicated above requires written permission of the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency.

Enquiries concerning this publication and its reproduction should be directed to:  
The Chief Executive Officer  
63 Henley Beach Road  
Mile End South Australia 5031  
T | +61 8 8234 8277  
F | +61 8 8234 0002  
E | [ruraldoc@ruraldoc.com.au](mailto:ruraldoc@ruraldoc.com.au)

[ruraldoc.com.au](http://ruraldoc.com.au)

The Rural Doctors Workforce Agency is a non-profit organisation that receives funding from the South Australian Department of Health, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and Rural Health Workforce Australia.

# From the Chairman

The RDWA has cemented its place as a crucial contributor in the provision of health services to rural communities. Our focus on providing a resident rural workforce continues. We are expanding our activities beyond general practitioners to include the recruitment and retention of allied health, nursing and midwifery in recognition of the team approach required to successfully service communities.

We remain committed to the retention of our workforce and will continue to provide a robust range of products and programs that address the needs of our doctors professionally, personally and that embrace their family circumstances.

Our ability to mobilise city-based providers will continue to grow to support the increase in services being provided to our rural population. This includes a specific focus on services to Indigenous communities.

To fulfill our charter we must act as a strong advocate for rural communities. To do this effectively we will continue to invest in our knowledge and information, allowing us to make a potent contribution to policies and program provided for rural people.

As all rural folk know, the best recipe for success is to work together with people, communities and organisations who share in our rural landscape. Our relationships with our funders and fellow providers add a valuable dimension to our ability to achieve our goals.

Our Strategic Direction 2011-2015 Heart and Soul reflects our commitment and passion for the work we do to enhance the health and wellbeing of rural communities in South Australia.

I ask that you support our ambitious agenda and embrace the RDWA Strategic Directions 2011-2015.

Dr Richard Mackinnon  
Chair





Our endeavours to partner with Aboriginal communities will remain a priority

Rural South Australia is our heartland



The success of the RDWA is underpinned by a recipe that includes robust governance of our organisation

The retention of a confident competent doctor workforce is key to our success



Over the coming period there will be an increase in the number of Australian graduates who become available and may well be attracted to work in rural areas



# Heart and Soul

## The future direction for the RDWA

We are a proud not for profit, confident and competent organisation. Our motivation is to deliver products and services that feed the soul and strengthen the heart of rural communities.

Our Strategic Directions for 2011-2015 builds on our success of providing a broad range of tailored services to ensure that we have a well skilled, well supported doctor workforce. Our recruitment and retention strategies including our holistic approach to all things impacting on general practice have delivered for GPs, their practices, their families and the rural communities they serve.

The Board of the RDWA has determined that our focus should broaden to include the recruitment and retention of other health professionals based in rural communities.

Our newly adopted charter reflects the expansion of our activities.

This will further increase our contribution toward enhancing the health outcomes of rural people and contribute to their confidence that rural communities are not only worthy but deserving of quality health services.

As an organisation we will continue to invest in our knowledge and capability. This investment extends to our staff and to our business partners. The information systems we have designed and constructed will continue to be refined and strengthened to ensure that we are able to make evidence based decisions in the deployment of our resources.

Our strategic alliances with the providers, designers and funders of rural health services will be particularly important over the coming period as the health system undergoes generational reform.

It continues to be my honour and privilege to lead the RDWA. The organisation operates from a strength demonstrated by its staff in that we strive to be the heart and soul of rural South Australia.

Lyn Poole  
Chief Executive Officer



# Charter

The RDWA provides the workforce to enhance the health and wellbeing of rural communities in South Australia

## Values and principles

The Rural Doctors Workforce Agency:

Acts with honesty, integrity and in good faith, ensuring that confidentiality is respected at all times

Makes decisions that are non-discriminatory, fair and equitable

Strives to be a high achieving and quality organisation that encourages learning, new ideas and solutions

Has partnerships and collaborations that are inclusive and complementary

Responds to the needs and concerns of individuals





# We're all about rural

## Partnerships

Rural South Australia is our heartland. The RDWA will continue to have respectful and potent relationships with all stakeholders who share our heartland. We have a responsibility to ensure that the rural population of South Australia receives their fair share of health services.

## Young People

We will ensure that we offer programs and services to enhance opportunities for rural young people to grow and participate as providers of services to their own communities. This will occur through our student programs starting as early as year 10, and will include our philanthropic activities through awards, recognition and individual sponsorship which support our rural young people.

## Students

We have a responsibility to ensure that those people who seek to be part of our rural workforce can immerse themselves in a rural environment through their training and education in both undergraduate and postgraduate study. The development of rural pathways from high school through to graduation and Fellowship as General Practitioners are crucial in successfully attracting an Australian trained resident rural workforce. In the same vein, our activities will expand to include support for rural graduates in Allied Health, Nursing and Midwifery.

## Australian Graduates

We continue to work in partnership with the regional training providers to ensure that all rural Registrars have every opportunity to succeed and gain positions in rural South Australian practices.

## Aboriginal Communities

Our endeavours to partner with Aboriginal communities will remain a priority. Our contribution, underpinned by genuine consultation, will be to provide specifically targeted services to Indigenous community controlled organisations and, when appropriate, directly to Aboriginal communities. We will ensure that the workforces who service rural South Australia are confident and appropriate in their dealings with Indigenous populations. It is imperative that all service providers are culturally competent.





# We deliver the workforce

## Resident Rural Workforce

The RDWA will continue to recruit a GP workforce that resides in country. In addition we will collaborate with all service delivery providers to expand our recruitment activity to include Allied Health, Nursing and Midwifery professionals working in the rural health care arena.

Over the coming period there will be an increase in the number of Australian graduates who become available and may well be attracted to work in rural areas. Evidence tells us that for the next five years it will be a blended model, and that we will need to continue to recruit international medical graduates and international health professionals to meet the needs of our rural communities. We take a holistic case-management approach to all offshore candidates to ensure that they have an affirming start to their lives in a new country.

## Retention

The retention of a confident competent doctor workforce is key to our success. We continue to offer tailored services to our resident doctors and their families. We focus on the professional needs, personal well-being and family support of resident health professionals in the support they receive, and that allows them to remain in rural practice and to undertake their roles with a strong sense of support and inclusion. For those GPs who trained off shore, this will include the mentoring and support needed to gain their Fellowship. We will also offer programs to allow all our resident GPs to plan for their future.

We will develop a range of programs and products to support the professional and personal needs of Allied Health, Nursing and Midwifery professionals.

Practical support and backup to our resident doctors through the delivery of our Locum Services will continue, and will expand with the introduction of additional program funding.

## Business Services

A holistic approach to all the ingredients that influence the attraction and retention of rural workforce requires us to maintain a focus not only on the workforce itself but on the business, human and physical infrastructure that supports its existence. It is well recognised that General Practice is the front door of the health system. The small business model is a common denominator when describing the home of much of the rural health workforce. To this end we will further enhance our products and services to ensure that the skills and knowledge regarding sound business practice are made available to rural health professionals.

## City Based, Country Bound

Much of our activity will continue to focus on the retention of our resident workforce; this is the preferred model in an ideal world. However given the distribution of population in rural South Australia, it is not possible to sustain a full complement of resident specialised workforce.

There is no apology that we will continue to offer programs that operate from a logistical base of 'City Based, Country Bound'. This mobilised workforce will continue to expand in the coming years. It is broadening from the mobilising of specialist services through MSOAP to include mobilising other health professionals to work in a team environment to tackle the burden of chronic disease in rural and remote Indigenous communities.

# The getting and giving of WISDOM

## Research

It is crucial that we invest in research and development. This will allow us to assess and challenge ourselves about the robustness of our programs and their potency.

Our capacity to interrogate the rich resources we hold in regard to our resident and mobile workforce must be utilised to provide the evidence to argue the fair share of resources for our rural population.

## Workforce Planning

This same information coupled with our research agenda will allow us to develop a better understanding on the future demand for rural workforce, not only the quantity but the mix and blend of skills that will be required. In parallel we will further invest in evidence-based research that increases our knowledge of the impediments and opportunities related to the supply and demand of rural workforce.

## Policy Development

It is our responsibility to share our knowledge and to influence the debates and policy determinations that impact on rural communities. We will partner with credible, respected organisations to publish our findings and to influence the thinking of rural communities, providers, policymakers and funders.

We do this to ensure that we are well placed to describe the needs of rural communities and the workforce that is required to provide the level of care and health outcomes that match their urban counterparts.

## Strategic Alliances

We will ensure that we retain an awareness of the changing construct of the systems that provide, fund and govern the health system in Australia. We will align ourselves with organisations that share our passion for rural health and have an ability to shape and enhance services and workforce.

## Advocacy

The health system is very complex and often fragmented in its ability to describe its overall impact. One of our ongoing challenges as an Agency will be to demonstrate our capacity to tell the story that describes the impact on rural communities as a result of changes to policy and the introduction of complementary or competing programs.

# It's about Achieving

Our governance structures provide leadership,  
accountability and transparency.



## Quality

The success of the RDWA is underpinned by a recipe that includes robust governance of our organisation. Our governance structures provide leadership, accountability and transparency. We will retain our ability to measure and test our performance as a contemporary organisation. We will maintain our quality framework and reporting across all areas of our activities to ensure that we grow and learn from our successes and our failures.

## Investment

The investment in our staff and their development is a fundamental ingredient to our success. We will strive to remain an employer of choice through the remuneration and conditions offered to our work group.

## Marketing

The professional image of our organisation and our ability to present ourselves both nationally and internationally in a professional and consistent way is an important part of our message as a capable, competent and compassionate organisation.

## Performance

It is imperative that we retain and expand our capability to interrogate all of our activities and assess our return on investment. We will ensure that our funders continue to have confidence in our capability and our commitment in the delivery of services and programs funded through government or their agents.

**RDWA | Rural Doctors Workforce Agency Inc**

63 Henley Beach Road  
Mile End South Australia 5031

T | +61 8 8234 8277

F | +61 8 8234 0002

E | [ruraldoc@ruraldoc.com.au](mailto:ruraldoc@ruraldoc.com.au)

[ruraldoc.com.au](http://ruraldoc.com.au)