

# SARRAH

Services for Australian  
Rural and Remote Allied Health

**Media Release**

21 February 2023

## **Executive Officer to the Allied Health Rural Generalist Accreditation Council Appointed**

An important step has been made to improved access to Allied Health services in rural and remote areas today with the appointment of Michael Bishop as Executive Officer to the Rural Allied Health Generalist Accreditation Council.

Professor David Prideaux, Chair of the Council, said “This is a milestone for the Allied Health sector, and a great acknowledgement of the work done by Allied Health Professionals in rural and remote Australia. Allied health rural generalism is a crucial development which has been a long time in the pipeline. The Council is pleased to support Michael Bishop in this role.”

The Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway (AHRG Pathway) is a health workforce development initiative that combines a formal education program with local support systems to develop rural generalist specialist skills in early-career allied health professionals (AHPs). Rural generalism is a critically important and practical development to support health professionals to provide the range of services needed in rural and remote Australia. The approach has been well recognised and supported in medical practice and will be as important in making sure people in rural and remote communities can access the allied health care generally available in metropolitan areas but in critical short supply outside of those centres.

Despite having a disproportionate burden of illness, people living rural and remote communities have poorer access to allied health services across hospital and community-based care, aged care, early childhood and disability services, contributing to lower life expectancy and high rates of avoidable hospitalisations compared to people living in metropolitan areas. The situation has very real human and financial costs in communities and for the nation.

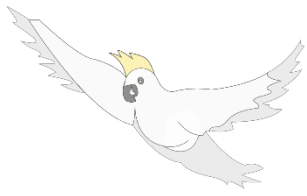
Health workforce shortages are a serious issue facing all levels of government. It will require focus not only as part of governments’ reform efforts flagged by National Cabinet, including in response to the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce, but through coordination of workforce development across governments, including Jobs and Skills Australia, the newly established national agency. Educations and skills portfolios must be involved fundamentally in addressing the health workforce challenges facing rural and remote Australia. Too often coordination between our workforce demand, supply and development and education and training policies has been missing: we need to invest effort in it.

Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH), the peak body for allied health professionals working in rural and remote Australia, welcomes the appointment of Mr Bishop to the role.

Cath Maloney, SARRAH CEO stated “The AHRG Pathway has taken many years to develop and the accreditation council will establish systems linking universities, state health

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departments, professional organisations and employers to develop rural career pathways for AHPs, and in growing the rural health workforce, improve access to services for rural and remote communities.”

Michael Bishop has a long association with Allied Health professional practice in rural and remote Australia having been a founding member of SARRAH and the National Rural Health Alliance. He represented the Allied Health professions at the first National Rural Health Conference in 1992 and has devoted many years to developing the profile of Allied Health Professionals in Australia and overseas.

He was the Executive Director of Rural Health and Aged Care in the Darling Downs in Queensland and also CEO of Central Highlands Healthcare (GP Superclinic) in Emerald Queensland. He has strong interests in clinical governance and the safety and quality of health services. His most recent position was as CEO of Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania where he led a project about developing generalist community workers, which reinforced his understanding of the complexities and value of community access to services.

Lisa Baker President of SARRAH said “the Executive Officer position is critical to the national implementation process of the Generalist Pathway for Allied Health professionals and Michael Bishop is well equipped to get this work done! His passion for Allied health Professionals in Rural and Remote Australia is well known”.

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SARRAH is the peak body representing rural and remote allied health professionals (AHPs) working in public, private and/or community settings SARRAH advocates on behalf of rural and remote Australian communities. SARRAH maintains that every Australian should have access to health services wherever they live, and the allied health services are fundamental to the well-being of all Australians.

<https://www.sarrah.org.au/>

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