



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

La Trobe Rural Health School Statement of Strategic Intent 2021-2025



2021-2025

The La Trobe Rural Health School (LRHS) proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where its campuses are located, recognises the ongoing connection to Country of local communities, and values the contributions First Nations people make to LRHS activities.

The LRHS aims to **Make Rural Health and Wellbeing Matter** locally, nationally and internationally through graduates and research outcomes that make a difference. We will foster social justice through engaging with the health and wellbeing of rural communities across Victoria recognising strengths and needs. We define rural as any region outside of a major Australian metropolitan city and are proud to be based on each of La Trobe's regional campuses in Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton. The School is distinctive for being entirely based in the regions, and graduating students from many health disciplines back into the rural Victorian health workforce. LRHS aspires to be not only Australia's largest rural health school, but also Australia's best rural health school as measured by our graduates' success as rural healthcare professionals, and our research rankings.

The LRHS Statement of Strategic Intent is an expression of the La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2020-2030 and contextualises our part in achieving the University's mission.

We are a university known for making a positive difference in the lives of our students, partners and communities. We will become an even more valued and relevant university because of the way we respond to their needs at this time of great local and national challenge.

There are **five strategic goals** that guide us in our work.



1. ACCESS

A distinctive rural and local student experience that intentionally supports success



2. CULTURE

A culture of being accountable, connected, innovative, and caring in how we work with students, our colleagues and communities



3. EQUITY

A focus on ensuring that all Australians, including First Nations people, have access to high quality and equitable health and social care



4. IMPACT

Graduates and research findings that make a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of rural people and their communities



5. RECOGNITION

Build a team of national and international experts in rural health research, and learning and teaching, who are committed to maximising health and wellbeing outcomes for rural people globally, nationally and locally

Make rural health and wellbeing matter



Without the excellent people who work here, the LRHS would not exist to serve both our students and the regional communities where we live and work. Our primary aim is to provide a safe, inclusive workplace that embraces the University's cultural values of being connected, innovative, accountable and caring. We believe that we are stronger together than we would be individually, therefore we actively find ways to work together both within, and outside of the LRHS. We use a partnership approach in all of our collaborations and avoid replication of existing central services, instead we aim to value add by facilitating a rural overlay. Ensuring staff health and wellbeing is a priority for the LRHS leadership team and is taken into account in all of our decision making about resource allocation. Staff achievements are both recognised and rewarded, and we routinely celebrate success. We use a set of principles for decision making and resource allocation.

The **four rural proofing principles** that we use include:



1. STRATEGIC

Everything we do in the LRHS needs to make rural health and wellbeing matter



2. RELEVANT

Activities need to be student-centred, investigate rural health and wellbeing and benefit our local communities



3. PARTNERSHIP

Consultation and communication plans will be culturally safe, comprehensive, iterative and authentic



4. COMMUNICATE

The benefits and implications for rural health can be clearly and succinctly messaged through traditional and non-traditional channels

We will know we have succeeded in our goal to develop a positive culture when we improve the Employee Experience as measured by a La Trobe Employee Experience Survey.

LRHS partners with key stakeholders to provide contemporary, innovative, and relevant educational experiences that will build Australia's future rural health workforce. We aim to increase the number of students we educate for life and for a good career. Supporting First Nations students to achieve success is a top priority, and we strive to ensure we work in culturally safe ways. We will embed First Nations' knowledges in organisational processes, teaching and research through developing strong partnerships with First Nations' staff and external First Nations organisations.

The practical experience students gain during their degrees mean our graduates are practice ready for rural health with a broad, generalist knowledge and skill set. The clinical placement and fieldwork opportunities provided to our students will be immersive, supportive, connected to rural communities and deliver an experience of the generalist knowledge and skill-base required of a rural practitioner.

Our curricula incorporate elements specific to rural health, to rural practice and are clearly differentiated from metropolitan based courses. We collaborate with industry partners to provide specialist continuing professional development opportunities for the existing rural workforce.

Ensuring access to education and research opportunities for students from regional and remote areas is important to us, and our selection process across all disciplines reflects this goal.

We welcome international students into our courses and support them to contextualise their learning to their home country. When students choose to study with us, our flexible approach to content delivery means that where possible they can engage in learning in a time and place of their choosing.

Our graduates will demonstrate excellent communication and influencing skills, they will be digitally literate and culturally safe. As well, they will understand the importance of life-long learning and critical thinking, using creative and innovative approaches to problem solving. LRHS graduates will have developed transferable leadership skills and understand what it means to serve their community.

We will know we have succeeded in our goals to increase access and reduce inequities in education when we have achieved parity for First Nations people in enrolments (3%) and achievement (non-Indigenous), and when 70% of LRHS students are of rural origin within three years.

Our rural health research activities are based on regional, national and international collaborations that foster reciprocity. We understand our partners' needs, bring together the right expertise, manage projects efficiently, act with integrity and help them to innovate by translating research results into practical applications.

As part of a large research active university, we will deliver high-quality research training, skills development and research support to local health professionals, supervisors, students and broader community stakeholders.

Our role in mentoring and supporting rural early career researchers, mid-level and senior researchers to enable them to join established research teams within and beyond the School is clear. For us, research impact is demonstrated by the improved health and wellbeing of rural people. We will continue our commitment to matters of importance to our local communities while developing solutions that address global social justice concerns through our international research activities and networks.

Our research expertise in rural ageing, rural workforce development, rural primary health care and rural community health and wellbeing is recognised through the John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research, the Violet Vines Marshman Centre for Rural Health Research, the Holsworth Initiative, and through our designation as an Australian Government University Department of Rural Health.

In all of our research we consider the potential impact of the research process and findings on First Nations people. We work with First Nations communities, organisations and their knowledges.

We will know we have succeeded in our goals to create impact and achieve recognition when we reach a research ERA ranking of 5 (well above world standard) for FOR (Fields of Research) 2403 Health Services and Systems, and an overall employment rate of graduates >95%.

Make rural health and wellbeing matter