

Should I stay or should I go?

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Context

Retention issues are expensive for rural health services, they impact on the quality of services provided and they reduce continuity of care for consumers.

Research questions

- 1.What is the experience of early career allied health professionals working in rural areas?
- 2.Can a rural generalist training pathway improve this experience, retention and the quality of services provided?

Research design

- 4 phases 2019-2021
- Mixed methods
- Qualitative - experiences, perceptions, demographics, intentions to stay, benefits, challenges, enablers and barriers
- Quantitative - costs, benefits, confidence, competence, retention, satisfaction, traits

Impact of this research

- Collaborative partnership between SA Health and Flinders University
- Evidence for retention of allied health in rural areas
- Exploring where, when for whom the rural generalist pathway is an effective strategy.
- Understanding the SA context and implications for workforce planning



Results – Experience of early career clinicians

- ✓ Developing problem solving skills, flexible thinking
- ✓ Good access to clinical support and training
- ✓ Warm, welcoming teams
- ✓ Opportunities for career advancement, autonomy

“Adelaide was never for me, I think. All my family, my friends, everyone that I kind of grew up with are all here so for me it was always probably going to be that I’d come back here, regardless of whether I was with my partner or not. I think I’m just more suited to country lifestyle.”

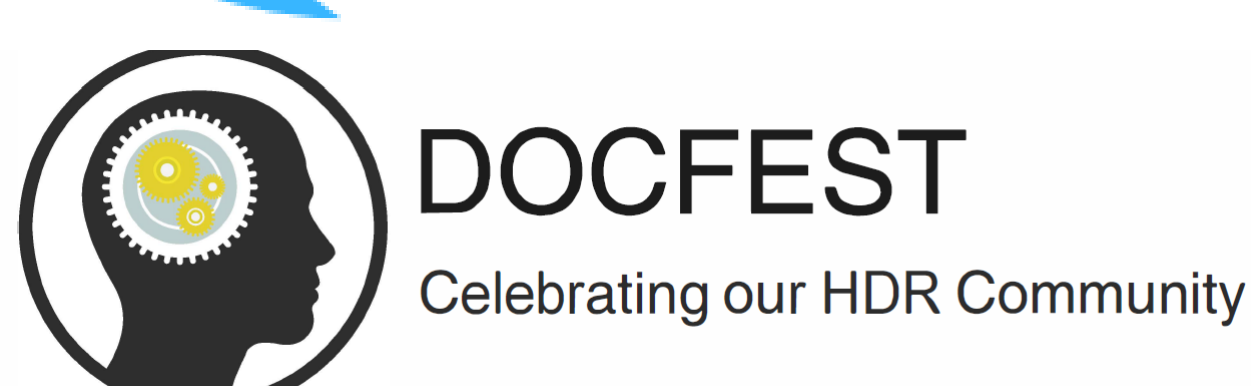
Participant 13.

“I’ve always had a bit of a passion to work in a rural area, starting from when I was at uni, and my last placement being in a rural area. I’ve had family and friends work in country areas... and was always taken aback by how kind people were and how welcoming it was.... it’s something I wanted to be a part of and thought this was a good time to test the waters and try it out.”

Participant 10.

- ✗ Challenging living away from home while transitioning to working
- ✗ Remote supervision and professional isolation
- ✗ Difficult working with multiple funding streams, complex clients and competing demands
- ✗ Short term contracts, challenging to find accommodation, feel secure and part of the community
- ✗ Ongoing vacancies results in high workloads, service gaps, prioritising challenges
- ✗ Burnout, stress and overwhelm for new graduates who are not prepared for rural practice or not well supported

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