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## Rural towns welcome influx of junior doctors

The New Year brings new lives into rural medical services, with interns and junior doctors taking up this year's positions across rural Australia over the coming weeks.

Dr RT Lewandowski, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) said that a good experience in rural practice is vital to succeeding to attract these young doctors into the bush longer-term.

"I know from first-hand experience that junior doctors having a great experience in rural is the most likely way to recruit them back into rural communities when their training is completed," Dr Lewandowski said.

"Rural General Practice is a highly rewarding speciality that gives doctors the opportunity to care for patients across all stages of life and to explore a range of special interests along the way.



"Rural Generalist practice, where you work as both a GP and also provide advance skill services either in the hospital or in the community, is one of the most interesting and exciting fields of medicine available to doctors today.

"Both provide variety, the ability to extend yourself, the opportunity to shape your individual practice according to your interests and lifestyle, and to really make a difference to people's lives in a meaningful and ongoing way.

"Unlike when you are following a specialist around a hospital, watching from the back of the room or processing all the paperwork, rurally-based trainees get a huge amount of hands-on experience, and dedicated and often individual training and supervision from their supervising doctors," Dr Lewandowski said.

"You can actually get to make a difference to the patients in your care, as well as to your new colleagues. There are opportunities to learn, grow and really boost your career if you choose to take them."

Even for those doctors who end up choosing a metro-based career, their time in a rural location is an invaluable experience that provides long-term insight into the needs and challenges of many patients seen in a metro setting.

"Every doctor, no matter what their speciality, will at some stage be a rural doctor, caring for and providing treatment to patients that travel in from the bush," Dr Lewandowski said.

“Understanding and having first-hand knowledge of the challenges faced by rural patients in accessing care, particularly non-GP specialist care, is so important.

“Understanding the travel times, the impact of being away from work and family, and the difficulty of remaining away from home to seek treatment can really help doctors formulate treatment plans and consultations more sympathetically to their rural patients.

“Whichever way you look at it, spending some time in rural will undoubtedly make you a better doctor.

“We encourage all the junior doctors beginning their placement journey to embrace the experience, really get to know the patients and the context of their health care, and take the time to explore the unique towns, communities and locations you have the rare opportunity to immerse yourself in.

“For their longer-term rural colleagues and the broader community, take the time to showcase all the great things about your town... the fabulous social aspect, sporting opportunities, community theatre, trivia nights... whatever your town has to offer that they can become involved in.

“Some regions have fantastic wineries, dining or adventure options. Many have fantastic schools and accessible child care. Coming in to a community where you don’t know anybody can be daunting, so anything you can do to welcome and engage these new docs’ in town would be greatly appreciated,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“Let’s make their rural rotation not only the best clinical experience they’ll ever have, but also the most fun!”

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A high resolution photo of Dr RT Lewandowski is [available here](#).

**Available for interview:**

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