

2021 NRHSN Project Brief

Executive Committee Structure Update
November 2020

the future of rural health

Project Information

Project Name	2021 NRHSN Project Brief	Project Owner	Jocelyn Ledger
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Document version history

Version	Date	Description of Changes	Author	Approved by
1.0	27/11/2020	Document Creation	Jocelyn Ledger	

Document consultation and distribution list

Name	Organisation	Role

Background

The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN) represents the future of rural health in Australia. Made up of over 10,000 members from over 29 Rural Health Clubs (RHCs) across all Australian States and Territories, it is Australia's only multidisciplinary student health network. The NRHSN brings together students studying medicine, nursing, midwifery and allied health who share an interest in remote, rural and regional health.

The NRHSN is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health administered as a consortium by the Rural Workforce Agencies. The NSW Rural Doctors Network is the RWA managing the NRHSN on behalf of the Consortium.

Each Australian State and the Northern Territory is served by a government designated RWA that works to improve access to high-quality healthcare for people in remote, regional and rural Australia. RWAs do this through a range of programs, services and initiatives that attract, recruit, retain and support GPs, nurses and allied health professionals in rural and remote communities.

The NRHSN has two primary aims:

- ▶ to provide a voice for students who are interested in improving health outcomes for remote, rural and regional Australian's
- ▶ to promote rural health careers to students and to encourage and support students with an interest in remote, rural and regional health care

Significant underrepresentation of rural students in undergraduate university cohorts, in particular health and medical degrees and associated recruitment and retention issues relating to adequately trained rural medical practitioners in remote, rural and regional parts of Australia in the 1980s led to increased media coverage in the mid-1980s heralding need for change. The impetus for change coincided directly with two key events occurring simultaneously – a state election in Western Australia (WA) and the New South Wales (NSW) Rural Doctors Dispute.

The events in WA and NSW adequately placed rural health on the national agenda. Responses to this included the establishment of the;

- ▶ Rural Incentives Program (RIP)
- ▶ Rural Undergraduate Support and Coordination (RUSC) Program
- ▶ University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) Program

In the context of these rural health initiatives, the first university student RHCs were formed. RHCs were established to promote remote, rural and regional practice in the university and the wider community through advocacy and support. RHCs work to achieve NRHSNs aims by;

- ▶ increasing education and awareness about rural health and the variety of careers available in remote, rural and regional Australia including possibly pathways, rewards and challenges unique to these working environments
- ▶ offer members the chance to experience remote and rural Australia
- ▶ provide information about rural scholarships and placement opportunities
- ▶ provide a social/networking base
- ▶ provide an additional support network to rurally based students relocating to metropolitan settings for study
- ▶ provide urban based students the opportunity to see, learn and experience what rural health is all about.

The NRHSN and its network of RHCs offer rural experience events, career information, clinical skills workshops and professional development activities specific to remote, rural and regional health. The network

also hosts meetings each year for RHCs leaders, featuring a range of speakers and sessions designed to engage and inspire attendees.

Despite tremendous success, the NRHSN and its associated RHCs have evolved synchronously to the changing health, political, economic, social and technological landscape. Thus, evidence suggests there is need for strategic redevelopment and change to ensure all students with an interest in remote, rural and regional healthcare and remote, rural and regional communities have a skilled, purposeful and relevant future health workforce to meet these changing needs.

Key to NRHSNs strategic redevelopment is the restructuring of the current NRHSN Executive committee. Reasons for strategic and Executive restructure relate to three key goals;

- ▶ improved internal communication to ensure NRHSN and its associated RHCs goals and objectives are achieved, evaluated and reviewed
- ▶ increased capacity to add value and engagement to RHCs across Australia
- ▶ increased stakeholder engagement across sectors.

These goals directly relate to NRHSNs vision – “to ensure every student who wants to go rural knows who the NRHSN are, what they do and how they can assist them in their pathway to remote, rural and regional healthcare and practice”.

In order to achieve this, NRHSN must redefine who we are and what we are.

This report aims to demonstrate how the NRHSN aims to achieve this to ensure the NRHSN supports Australia’s future rural health workforce in the best way possible.

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

This report aims to explain what strategic redevelopment and Executive restructure will look like, how it will work, why it will benefit NRHSN, RHCs and Australia future rural health workforce, when it will be implemented and who this will affect.

Up until now, the NRHSN national Executive committee has been made up of;

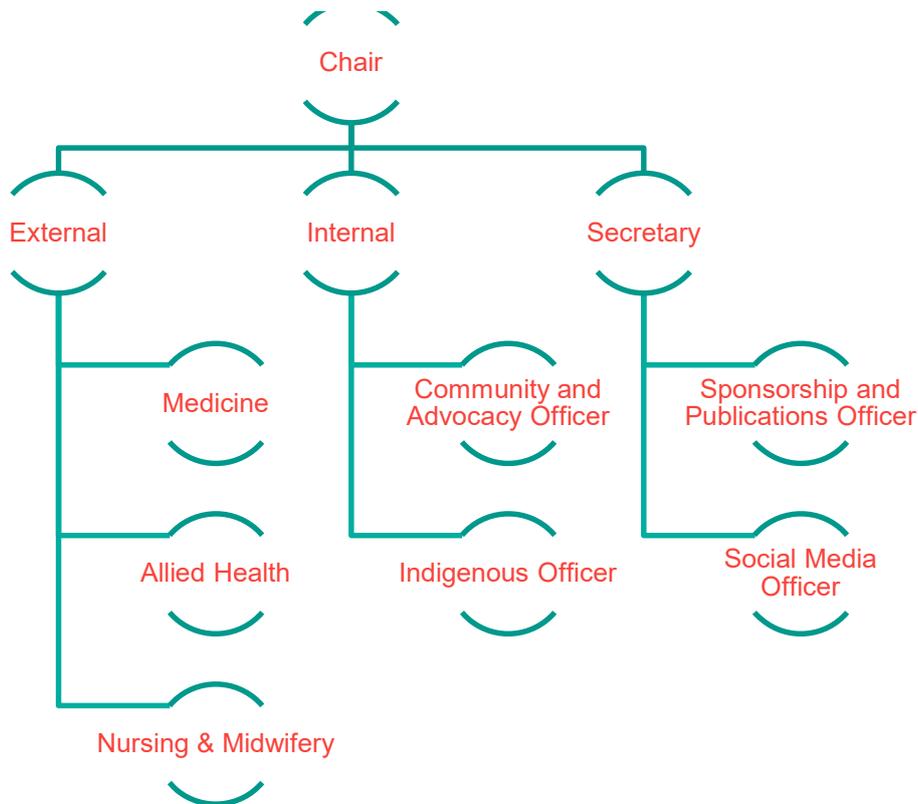
- ▶ Chair
- ▶ Vice Chair
- ▶ Secretary
- ▶ Allied Health Officer
- ▶ Community and Advocacy Officer
- ▶ Indigenous Health Officer
- ▶ Medical Officer
- ▶ Nursing and Midwifery Officer

The Executive Committee to date has advocated for rural health students of all disciplines regarding remote, rural and regional education, training and support. The NRHSN Executive Committee is represented on the Council of the National Rural Health Alliance, the Advisory Committee to the Board of Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health, the CRANaplus student and early career graduates sub-committee to the

Board, and the Medical Schools Outcomes Database run by the Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand, and is also represented on the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine’s advisory committees for the Bonded Support Program and John Flynn Placement Program.

However, to increase capacity, engagement and purpose of the NRHSN at an Executive and grassroots level, Executive restructure is required.

The diagram below illustrates the proposed new Executive structure for NRSHN;



Objectives

To clearly understand to objectives of each Executive role and their responsibility in the new NRHSN Executive structure, the following table has been produced. The table below highlights the roles and responsibilities of each Executive member.

Internal Executive Roles, Responsibilities and Goals

	Chair	Internal Executive	External Executive	Secretary
Reports to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ NSW RDN (RWA representative of the RWAN administrator) ▶ Department of Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Chair
Reports from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All NRSHN Executive Committee roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Community and Advocacy Officer ▶ Indigenous Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Medical Officer ▶ Allied Health Officer ▶ Nursing and Midwifery Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sponsorship and Publications Officer ▶ Social Media Officer
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop the aims and implementation of the NRHSN ▶ Ensure the long-term goals of NRHSN are continued ▶ Support National Executive Positions ▶ Provide leadership to National Executive team and RHCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support the Chair in achieving NRHSN priorities and agenda ▶ Provide internal leadership to RHCs ▶ Manage and provide value to RHCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support the Chair in achieving NRHSN priorities and agenda ▶ Provide external leadership and cohesive voice for NRHSN members at a national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support the Chair in achieving NRHSN priorities and agenda ▶ Provide internal and external leadership ▶ Manage and provide value to RHCs through administration
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Rural Health Commissioner ▶ FRAME ▶ NRHA ▶ SARRAH ▶ ARHEN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ RHCs ▶ RWAN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ RWA for each State/Territory ▶ RDAA ▶ MDANZ ▶ ACDHS ▶ ACCRM ▶ JFPP ▶ SPINIFEX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ RHCs ▶ RWAN

	Chair	Internal Executive	External Executive	Secretary
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Creation of business plan ▶ Creation of communication strategy ▶ Creation of strategic plan ▶ Succession planning for NRHSN and RHCs ▶ Oversee effective information sharing between NRHSN and RHCs ▶ Represent NRHSN and members with peak national stakeholders ▶ Facilitate formal consultation processes on relevant issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support the Chair, External Exec and Secretary ▶ Plan, develop and administer National Council meetings ▶ Management and coordination of RHCs ▶ Provides support and direction to RHC with the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leadership ○ Advocacy ○ Events ○ Membership ○ Finances/funding ○ Club Administration ○ RHC Elections/succession planning ○ RHCs are in line with NRHSN brand and guidelines ○ RHC accountability for funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support the Chair, Internal Exec and Secretary ▶ Plan, develop and administer strategy with Chair on Stakeholder engagement ▶ Attend and manage stakeholder meetings, events, etc ▶ Coordinate Officers stakeholders and their engagement (set expectations and ongoing relationship goals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Support the Chair and Internal/External Executives ▶ Ensure agreed upon process are followed for reports, submissions, policies, meeting attendance ▶ Engage and support sponsorship and publications manager and social media manager to ensure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Duties and responsibilities are performed in a timely manner ○ Consistent with NRHSN brand guidelines, business plan etc ▶ Administer Executive Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scheduling, circulating agenda, minute and distribute minutes ○ Assign and follow up actions from meetings ▶ Administer National Membership Database, Website ▶ Administer National Elections including communication, collation, voting ▶ Manage, organise and collate documents in document management source ▶ Assist internal Executive officer with management of RWA and RHCs

Officer Roles, Responsibilities and Goals

	Medicine	Nursing and Midwifery	Allied Health
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Represent Medical Students at National Stakeholder meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communicate with RHC upcoming meetings/conferences/working groups attending. Seek their input to represent interests ○ Represent RHC interests at meetings ○ Report to the NRHSN and RHC outcomes of representation ▶ Engage with Medical RHC representatives ▶ Facilitate relationships between stakeholders and RHCs ▶ Create novel publication or research or working party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Represent Nursing and Midwifery (N&M) at National Stakeholder meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communicate with RHC upcoming meetings/conferences/working groups attending. Seek their input to represent interests ○ Represent RHC interests at meetings ○ Report to the NRHSN and RHC outcomes of representation ▶ Engage with N&M RHC representatives ▶ Facilitate relationships between stakeholders and RHCs ▶ Create novel publication or research or working party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Represent Allied Health (AH) Students at National Stakeholder meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communicate with RHC upcoming meetings/conferences/working groups attending. Seek their input to represent interests ○ Represent RHC interests at meetings ○ Report to the NRHSN and RHC outcomes of representation ▶ Engage with AH RHC representatives ▶ Facilitate relationships between stakeholders and RHCs ▶ Create novel publication or research or working party
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ GPSN ▶ AMSA ▶ RACS ▶ RACGP + RACGP Rural ▶ Medicine RHC representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CRANaplus ▶ ACN ▶ ACM ▶ CATSINaM ▶ APNA ▶ ASANNA ▶ Nursing and Midwifery RHC representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ AHPA ▶ ASPA ▶ SPA (Speech Pathology) ▶ NAPSA ▶ SPA (Paramedics) ▶ APA (Physio) ▶ RPA (Pharmacy) ▶ ADSA (Dental) ▶ Allied Health RHC Representatives

	Community and Advocacy Officer	Indigenous Officer	Sponsorship and Publications Officer	Social Media Officer
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ RHSV Coordinator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring RHCs complete required RHSV ○ Assisting RHCs in contacting high schools and maintaining relationships ○ Providing RHCs with support and resources to complete RHSV ▶ RHC Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assist Internal Exec with management of RHCs ▶ Represent Students at National Stakeholder meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communicate with RHC upcoming meetings/conferences/workshops attending. Seek their input to represent interests ○ Represent RHC interests at meetings ○ Report to the NRHSN and RHC outcomes of representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ICEA Coordinator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring RHCs complete required ICEA ○ Assist RHCs with support and resources to complete ICEA ○ Facilitate communication and support between RHCs and stakeholders ▶ Represent Students at National Stakeholder meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communicate with RHC upcoming meetings/conferences/workshops attending. Seek their input to represent interests ○ Represent RHC interests at meetings ○ Report to the NRHSN and RHC outcomes of representation ▶ Engage with Indigenous RHC level executives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Production and publication of cooee! newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curate and collate unique rural and RHC content for newsletter to be published quarterly ○ Collaborate with stakeholders for news and relevant information for publication ▶ Gain sponsorship for Councils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work with external and internal vice chairs and secretary to organise stakeholder attendance at Council Meetings ▶ Maintaining website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assisting secretary to maintain website content is current and up to date ○ Assist RHC with using website ▶ RHC Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assist Internal Exec with management of RHCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responsible for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facebook ○ Instagram ○ Twitter ○ LinkedIn ○ Hootsuite ○ Linkr Tree ○ Canva ▶ Create unique content to engage existing members and to promote NRHSN to expand membership network ▶ Collaborate with Sponsorship and Publications Officer, External Vice Chair and Internal Vice Chair to promote relevant and appropriate information from Stakeholders ▶ RHC Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assist Internal Exec with management of RHCs
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CWA ▶ Students of Rural Health Aotearoa (SoRHA) ▶ RHCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ AIDA ▶ IAHA ▶ LIME ▶ NATSIHWA ▶ NACCHO ▶ Indigenous RHC Representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ RHCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ RHCs

KPIs/Targets

As aforementioned, the three goals below significantly shaped the rethinking of the NRHSN Executive and how and why the NRHSN requires an updated strategy

- ▶ improved internal communication to ensure NRHSN and its associated RHCs goals and objectives are achieved, evaluated and reviewed
- ▶ increased capacity to add value and engagement to RHCs across Australia
- ▶ increased stakeholder engagement across sectors

In order to comprehensively implement these goals, the NRHSN, RHCs, internal and external stakeholders and future rural health workforces must understand how and what they mean.

Goal 1

Internal communication is critical to achieving the NRHSN and associated RHCs goals and objectives. In establishing strong Internal Executive Leadership supported by the NRHSN restructure and development of an Internal Executive Committee, understanding of roles, responsibilities and objectives will be more clearly defined. Strong leadership, clearly defined roles and expectations will help facilitate clear communication between RHCs and NRHSN. Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) such as Microsoft Teams will support this.

Goal 2

Understanding what value means and how it impacts the NRHSN and associated RHCs is critical to improving the NRHSN.

NRHSN aims to add value to RHCs by;

- ▶ providing leadership and accountability to RHCs and fostering accountability from RHCs to NRHSN to ensure RHC goals and objectives are met, and opportunities and support for students interested in rural health are optimised
- ▶ Advocate for all RHCs to ensure RHCs concerns, issues and achievements are communicated to stakeholders
- ▶ providing face-to-face support to RHC leaders and committees through club visits, check-in's and Council meetings
- ▶ increase networking opportunities through Council and by facilitating internal and external stakeholder introductions through appropriate NRHSN Executive members
- ▶ provide opportunities for professional development and upskilling for RHC leaders and members including leadership training, communication skills and relationship building workshops among others
- ▶ provide access to and utilisation of resources to increase capacity and value of RHCs. For example, providing access to speakers, engagement guides and advice from NRHSN Executive and internal and external stakeholders to ensure RHC goals and objectives are met
- ▶ creating an environment in which RHC members want to be a part of
- ▶ By adding value to RHCs, the NRHSN is increasing sustainable engagement with RHCs across Australia.

Goal 3

Increasing external stakeholder engagement is critical to improving the NRHSN and raising the profile of student issues, opportunities and goals relating to remote, rural and regional health and practice. Increasing stakeholder engagement aims to be achieved through NRHSN Executive restructure. This aims to clarify roles, responsibilities and goals of NRHSN Executive to increase engagement with internal and external stakeholders to better achieve NRHSN goals and objectives.

By setting targets to add value to RHCs, NRHSN is better positioned to achieve their vision;

“to ensure every student who wants to go rural knows who the NRHSN are, what they do and how they can assist them in their pathway to remote, rural and regional healthcare and practice”.

Guiding Principles

Based on formal and informal information sharing and feedback, the following is proposed.

Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ NRHSN requires restructure to increase capacity, value and purpose in supporting RHCs, internal and external stakeholder and most importantly the needs of students with an interest in remote, rural and regional health and practice ▶ it is assumed some RHCs are not working at capacity evidenced by leaders are not engaging with NRHSN and members failing to engage with RCH leaders, events and opportunities ▶ It is assumed rural health students, RHCs and stakeholders do not know who the NRHSN are and what they do ▶ NRHSN and its associated RHCs can be revitalised through structural changes to leadership, improved communication channels, improved stakeholder engagement and reviewed goals and objectives
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A limitation includes the effect funding from Universities rather than NRHSN has on NRHSN accountability and purpose and the associated reporting to Universities secondary to funding allocation that produces. ▶ Limitations for successful restructure and strategic redevelopment relate to leader and member reluctance for change and miscommunicated information to stakeholders, RHCs and members.
Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Structural changes to the NRHSN executive are proposed to achieve NRSHN goals and objectives and meet targets of internal and external stakeholders

Roles and Responsibilities

For greater details, see Purpose and Objectives.

Stakeholder Management and Communication

For further details, see Purpose and Objectives.

Issues and Risks

Issues: Identified issues include;

- ▶ failure to handover proposed strategy by NRHSN 2020 handover
- ▶ the effect funding from Universities rather than NRHSN has on NRHSN accountability and purpose and the associated reporting to Universities secondary to funding allocation that produces
- ▶ Challenges associated with NRHSN ICT including the website may present issues around translation of data between RHCs and NRHSN
- ▶ likelihood of current membership base to engage with and apply for new NRHSN Executive positions

Risks: Identified risks include;

- ▶ disengagement from current and future NRHSN executive, members and associated RHCs and internal and external stakeholders
- ▶ failure to implement proposed changes
- ▶ failure to meet proposed goals and objectives
- ▶ failure to handover proposed strategy by NRHSN 2020 handover
- ▶ the internal executive team lacks necessary skills to be able to add value to RHCs
- ▶ the external executive team lacks necessary skills to be able to communicate and engage with NRHSN and external stakeholders effectively
- ▶ to not set up effective monitoring and evaluation of Executive Committee roles and responsibilities

Monitoring and Evaluation

	Reporting timelines	Reporting to
Individual Executive Report	Monthly Reporting on specific goals and objectives	Chair
Monthly Stakeholder Report	Monthly	Chair
Monitor uptake and engagement in NRHSN activities such as Council and NRHSN check-in's at RHCs	Quarterly	Chair
Monitor engagement with external stakeholders and attendance at external events and meetings with stakeholders	Quarterly	Chair