



Rural Medical Pathway: a Victorian first

October 2019

A first for Victoria & the MDMSN

- Since July 2018, La Trobe and the University of Melbourne (UoM) have partnered to give 15 regional and rural Australians each year the opportunity to commence end to end medical training in regional Victoria (Bendigo, Albury-Wodonga, Shepparton)
- Our Rural Medical Pathway was **the first program to commence as part of the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network** announced in 2018 Cwlth Budget



"We know that people from a regional city or town, who learn in regional Victoria have the best possible chance of graduating and working in regional Victoria. That's our central premise,"

Prof John Dewar, Vice-Chancellor, La Trobe University, May 2018

"This partnership ... will allow even more rural and regional students to train as doctors, which will improve health service provision and outcomes for people living in those areas,"

Prof Glyn Davis, Vice-Chancellor, University of Melbourne, May 2018

Our rural medical pathway

- **Maximises opportunities for people with rural backgrounds** who are interested in practising medicine in rural and regional areas
- **Flips the current city-centric medical training model**, with majority of medical training undertaken in the regions

Entails:

- A 3 year **Bachelor of Biomedical Science (Medical)** at La Trobe's **Bendigo or Albury-Wodonga campus**
- A 4-year Doctor of Medicine (Rural Pathway) at the UoM in **Shepparton** (subject to a weighted mark of 75)
- 15 regional/rural students annually, co-selected by La Trobe and UoM

Significant demand



200 applications for the first (2019) intake

La Trobe offer to applicant rate: 1:13

Monash offer to applicant rate: 1:12*



47 applicants interviewed

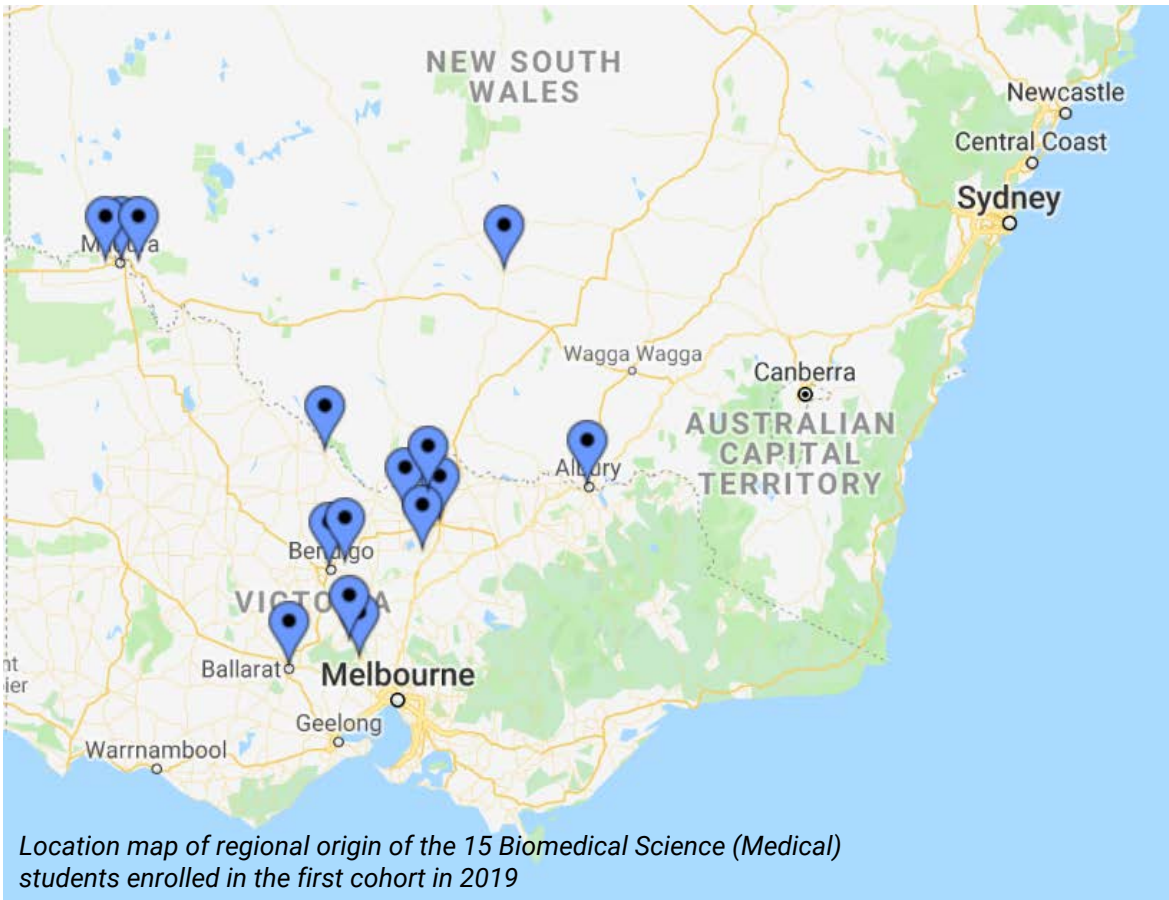


2020: 1st preferences have increased

- **Albury-Wodonga by 100%**
- **Bendigo by 37%**

The selection process targets applicants with rural backgrounds who are seeking a career in the rural health workforce. To be eligible, applicants must have had their principal home address, for at least 5 years consecutively, or 10 years cumulatively, in areas classified by the Australian Statistical Geographic Standard-Remoteness Area (ASGS-RA) as RA2 to RA5 and preferably have completed Years 11 and 12 at a school in an area classified as RA2 to RA5.

Regional origin of first cohort



“There is good evidence that rural origin is a strong predictor of choice of rural work location” (Mason, 2013)

12 students in Bendigo 3 in Albury-Wodonga

- Origin is a mix of high-schools (Government, Catholic, Independent)
- In 2020, the Albury-Wodonga cohort will undertake their anatomy practical classes in Bendigo



Abigail Rowe (Mildura local and Biomedical Science (Medical) student)

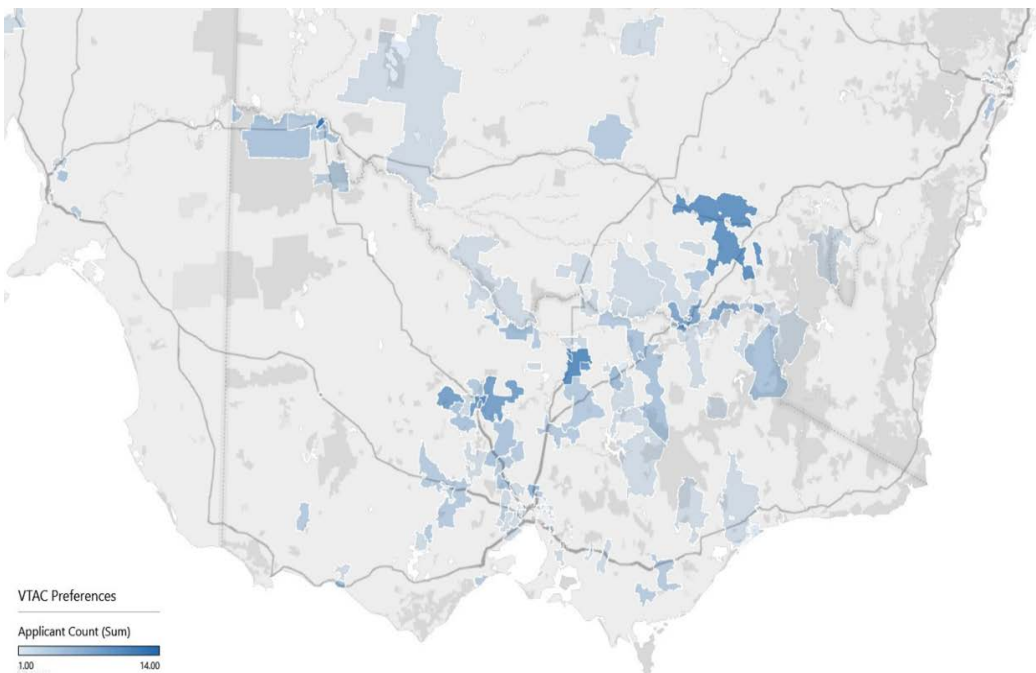
“For a rural girl like myself, to have the opportunity to study in areas just like my home town is not only comforting but offers hands on learning that may not be as accessible in a city-based course.”

Increased demand for 2020 intake

From 2019: 200 applicants

To 2020: first preferences have increased

- **Albury-Wodonga** ↑ 100%
- **Bendigo** ↑ 37%
- Applicants from every state and territory
- High concentration from central and northern Victoria, Mildura and southern New South Wales



Biomedical Science (Medical): Preferences by Postal Postcode

"I [took] part in the La Trobe Open Days in Shepparton, Albury-Wodonga and Bendigo to jointly promote our rural pathway, and it was wonderful to witness first-hand the growing interest prospective students have in this pathway."

Professor Julian Wright, Head, Department of Rural Health, University of Melbourne

Biomedical Science (Medical): Preferences by Postal Postcode - Australia Heat Map



A community collaboration

- Joint selection process (at UoM's Rural Clinical School in Shepparton), includes members of the regional community
- La Trobe students engage with UoM students and grads through guest speaker opportunities and profession-based mentoring
 - La Trobe students have been invited to join the UoM's medical student association and rural clinical school group
- Rural medical experts, inc hospital CEOs, regional surgeons and doctors deliver guest presentations
- Research collaborations underway between the UoM, Western Sydney University, Charles Sturt University and others within MDMSN

"Our collaboration in the student selection is very important, as most of all the previous students come from Melbourne and have little interest in working rurally." Nick Bush, CEO, Echuca Health



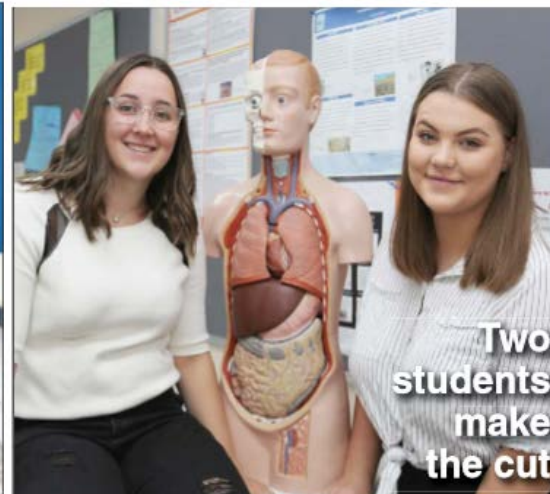
La Trobe students hearing from Professor Julian Wright at UoM in Shepparton during orientation week, Feb 2019

Community support

News of the pathway and the opportunity given to regional students to address the rural doctor shortage attracted significant national, state and local media coverage



Worthwhile: Goulburn Valley Grammar School graduate Ella Sprunt and Notre Dame College's Gabriella Hill began their long study journey to become doctors yesterday.



Cassandra Hocking and Bridget Fallon have been selected to commence a unique medical program designed to help solve Australia's rural doctor shortage.



Bridget Fallon and Cassandra Hocking in an anatomy lab at La Trobe University

Bush battle for doctors

Rural areas pull out all stops to lure health workers

DESPERATE country towns are trying to tempt doctors and therapists to rural regions with \$20,000 relocation fees, free houses and cars, or promising no after-hours work. More than 150 jobs for GPs and allied health professionals are being advertised statewide, with some areas offering salaries of up to \$10,000 a week, or \$450,000 packages. The largest staff shortage is in Northern Victoria, with the Murray region seeking 59 GPs. In Western Victoria, 41 GP positions and six locum GPs are needed, according to the Rural Workforce Agency Vic.

BRIGID O'CONNELL

toria, with 31 positions vacant in Gippsland. Doctors with specialist training in obstetrics, women's health, emergency medicine and indigenous health are the most sought after. Physiotherapists, speech pathologists, counsellors, nurses and psychologists are the most advertised jobs in allied health. It comes as aspiring rural doctors can now complete their degree in the country. La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne have launched the first completely

rural-based medical degree in Australia — for which you need to come from the country and intend to stay in the country — as a way to address Victoria's rural doctor shortage.

The 15 students will first complete the three-year Bachelor of Biomedical Science (Medical) undergraduate degree at La Trobe's Bendigo or Albury-Wodonga campuses. Upon completion, with decent grades, they are guaranteed entry into the University of Melbourne's new four-year Doctor of Medicine (Rural) postgraduate degree in Shepparton. At this point another 15

students can apply to join the graduate course.

Flem Cracknell, 38, is among the degree's first cohort from a pool of 200 applicants. The Ballarat team said he became passionate about becoming a country doctor after seeing the 200km round trip his family had to make to access healthcare. "I love the whole community vibe, but I also like the idea of filling one of these roles so people can get care faster," he said. AMA Victoria president Julian Ball said the association was calling for more investment into rural general prac-



Flem Cracknell, 38, is a La Trobe University medical student. Picture: DAVID CARO

tice and regional hospitals in its state Budget submission. "In the country it's economically not viable to charge in-payments," Associate Professor Ball said. "The net effect of that has been that, over the last five years, there has probably been a 2 per cent fall in incomes for city GPs, there's been more like a 10 per cent drop for rural doctors."

brigit.abcnews.com.au



ASPIRATIONS: Bendigo student Archana Christopher hopes to have a career as a doctor in a rural community. Picture: DARREN HOWE

Government investment




Oscar McGraw and Flinn Cracknell testing out SimMan at University of Melbourne's Clinical School in Shepparton during Orientation Week, Feb 2019

- \$7 million for La Trobe to deliver the new medical pathway in 2018 Cwth Budget
- Directed to capital investments and staff appointments:
- **6 Academic:**
 - 1 x Associate Professor Biomedical Science (AW)
 - 2 x Lecturer Biomedical Science (AW)
 - 1 x Lecturer Anatomy (Bendigo)
 - 1 x Senior Lab Technician (AW)
 - 1 x Senior Lab Technician (Bendigo)
- **2 professional:**
 - 1 x Senior Project Coordinator
 - 1 x Marketing and Engagement Advisor

Capital

works

A photograph of four Biomedical Science students in a laboratory setting. In the foreground, a student in a red hoodie is seen from the back. In the middle ground, a female student with glasses and a black hoodie with a 'bjra' logo is smiling while holding a silver tablet. To her right, a male student in a yellow sweater is also smiling. In the background, a large screen displays a 3D anatomical model of the human heart and its associated blood vessels. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a modern educational environment.

Biomedical Science (Medical) students: Isabella Trevaskis, Oscar McGraw, Cassandra Hocking, and Sam Clark

Albury-Wodonga

\$2m capital: two science laboratories, a preparation room and equipment



Before (May 2019)



After (Oct 2019)

Bendigo

\$600k: refurbishment of anatomy labs



Before (Jan 2019)



After (Mar 2019)

Timeline



Biomedical Science (Medical) students, Gabriella Hill, Oscar McGraw, Archana Christopher, and Cassandra Hocking using the new Anatomy lab and innovative augmented reality technology

2018

May

- Cwth Government announced creation of the end-to-end rural medical program

July

- MoU signed b/ween La Trobe and UoM
- Selection criteria agreed with UoM
- Biomedical Science (Medical) course approved (Academic Board)

Aug

- Course added to VTAC and UAC
- Course promoted at Open Days and recruitment events

Sep – Nov

- Recruitment of key staff
- Coursework preparations
- Interview selection process agreed with UoM

Dec

- Interviewers recruited and trained. Interviewers included community members, regional medical practitioners as well as staff from La Trobe and UoM
- Year 12 results released, applicants shortlisted and invited to interview



Flinn Cracknell
Hometown: Ballarat, VIC

WHY I APPLIED FOR THE COURSE

[I] have wanted to be a doctor since I was a child as I saw how the doctors cared for my Mum's autoimmune disease during my childhood. This desire was further confirmed when I saw how big a role the doctors played in my Nan's Parkinson's disease treatment and care.

HIGHLIGHTS

I enjoy the smaller classes as it allows me to have a more personal relationship with the lecturers and to form close relationships with my peers.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

As a regional medical practitioner, I plan to work as a GP in a regional town once I complete the course for a few years. I will then specialise and continue to work in regional areas possibly in the cardiac field although I am yet undecided.

2019

Jan

- Selection interviews held at UoM in Shepparton
- Offers made to selected candidates and enrolment begins
- Newly recruited staff commence
- Refurb begins - Bendigo anatomy lab

Feb

- Offer and enrolment process completed
- First 15 students enrolled in the Rural Medical Pathway
- Student Orientation – inc visit to UoM in Shepparton

March

- Students commence Semester 1
- Completion of Bendigo Anatomy Lab

May

- Construction begins - Albury Wodonga Science Labs
- Development of new second year (2020) subjects underway

June

- Students complete exams - **all have weighted average marks above the required 75, with the cohort averaging 85.11 across all subjects and campuses**



Srishti Chatterji

Hometown: Griffith, NSW

WHY I APPLIED FOR THE COURSE

Its focus on rural communities initially piqued my interest as I have first-hand experience of the discrepancies in healthcare between metropolitan and regional locations. Furthermore, due to my love of science, I also liked how this course consists of an undergraduate Biomedical Science degree followed by a graduate Medicine degree. In my opinion, while this pathway is lengthy, it ensures that students have a very firm foundational knowledge in human and health sciences, which will ultimately create competent medical practitioners.

HIGHLIGHTS

I'm enjoying the delivery of content and the interesting topics covered in a palatable form through interactive lectures, hands on workshops, and tutorials. I also like how medical knowledge is integrated with other scientific content early in the course.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

I hope to specialise in paediatrics or psychiatry and practice in rural locations in the future.

2019 (cont.)

July

- Students attend cohort building trip to Albury-Wodonga
 - o Students from both campuses attend classes together in AW
 - o Students receive presentations by Echuca Regional Health CEO, a Surgeon from Albury Wodonga Surgical, and a Professor from John Richards Centre for Rural Aged Care
 - o Students attend public lecture by Professor Andrew Hill from the La Trobe Institute for Molecular Sciences on research into Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases

Aug

- Promotion of course at Open Days and recruitment events
- Current regional doctor and UoM graduate speaks to students in a profession mentoring session

Sep

- Completion of the Albury Wodonga Science Laboratories – on schedule and on budget

Oct

- All 15 students complete their final weeks of semester 2 classes



Abigail Rowe
Hometown: Mildura, VIC

WHY I APPLIED FOR THE COURSE

The course takes into consideration not only the academic abilities needed to become a doctor but also the personal characteristics by selecting students who are active and valued members of their community. Not only is the criteria for the course ideal but also the time spent in rural areas studying. For a rural girl myself, to have the opportunity to study in areas just like my home town is not only comforting but offers hands on learning that may not be as accessible in a city base course.

HIGHLIGHTS

I've definitely enjoyed the easy transition into university life that La Trobe has provided, moving away from home can be overwhelming and I'm grateful for the support and consideration. I have also loved studying at the rural campus with lecturers and students from the same backgrounds as myself. It is also the friendships that I have made with the other members of the first cohort that has made the first semester so enjoyable as it has been fun to share the excitement, we all have for our futures as medical professionals.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

I hope to gain as much experience as I can as a doctor after I finish my doctorate at Melbourne University. After I have pushed myself to become the best, I can be the dream is to definitely return home and help the members of my incredible community.



Gabriella Hill

Hometown: Shepparton, VIC

WHY I APPLIED FOR THE COURSE

I applied for the Bachelor of Biomedical Science (medical) course in order to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. Being a rural based program, I was inspired to apply for this course as I believed having a smaller cohort would provide a more in-depth learning experience. Held only in rural locations, the Bachelor of Biomedical Science (medical) course also meant that I wouldn't be expected to pay the high living costs often experienced in the city. After partaking in work experience at the Shepparton Base Hospital, where the later part of our degree is held in conjunction with Melbourne University, I was further inspired to apply for this course. In addition to this, the convenience with having the second part of the course held in my home town, Shepparton, was another reason I also decided to apply for the Bachelor of Biomedical Science (medical) course.

HIGHLIGHTS

After completing only one semester of the course, I am enjoying the fact that the student-lecturer relationships are close and quite similar to high school student-teacher relationships. This allowed for an easy transition into university and also encouraged my learning as I felt comfortable asking questions and seeking any assistance. I am also enjoying the subjects and learning the diversity of content that is being taught. The small cohort has also meant that we have formed valuable friendships, both in class and out.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

My career aspirations as a regional medical practitioner are to one day specialise in a field of medicine. I am currently unsure of exactly what field I'd like to go into but I hope that my speciality will allow me to be able to provide elite care to those who are disadvantaged and would otherwise not be able to seek the help they need.



Oscar McGraw

Hometown: Cohuna, VIC

WHY I APPLIED FOR THE COURSE

To study a medical degree whilst being able to maintain and build on existing relationships that I have developed in the rural community so that I can eventually return to work there once I have completed my tertiary studies.

HIGHLIGHTS

Not only am I enjoying the theoretical challenges of the course and the associated content, but also the social aspect of university life. I've found the transition into university life to be an extremely stimulating and enjoyable experience as you are constantly making new friends and connections, especially being surrounded by likeminded people who share similar aspirations and desires.

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

To develop a dependable reputation and close sense of connectedness to a small rural community in which individuals can go to for reliable medical treatment and support. This would ultimately involve becoming adept in as many specialisations as possible in an attempt to increase both the breadth of care and efficiency at which medical care can be delivered to regional areas.



Thank you

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