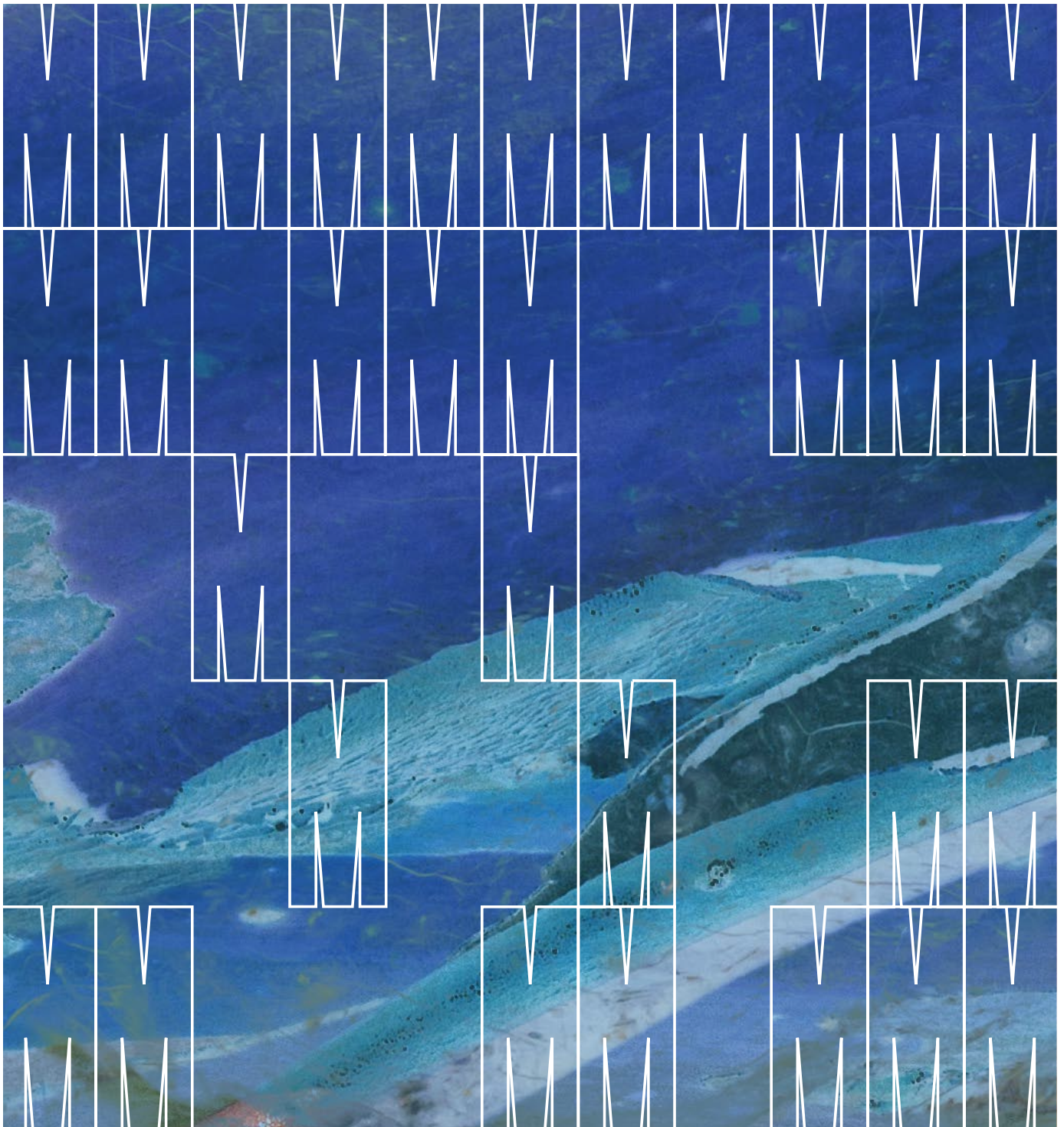


2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2027

The *Monash Rural Health 2023–2027 Strategic Plan* outlines our School's future vision in rural health and education, and sets our priorities for the five-year period.

Access to healthcare, health workforce maldistribution and lack of a range of rurally-based postgraduate speciality training opportunities are just some challenges rural Australia faces. We want to play a critical role in growing the rural health workforce and researching contemporary issues to deliver safe and sustainable healthcare that improves the health outcomes of regional, rural and remote communities.

Our plan provides the catalyst for innovative and collaborative engagement within Monash Rural Health, Monash University, our communities and our industry partners, to address these current and future problems.

The primary goals of our *Strategic Plan 2023–2027* are illustrated below. Throughout this booklet, you will see these icons beside achievements and stories that align with these goals.



Build the future rural workforce through student recruitment, retention and engaging rural experiences



Increase access of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders to health professions education, and success and employment in their chosen field



Improve diversity and inclusion among staff



Build and strengthen links and partnerships in education and research across the School, the University and wider community



Increase the access and success of groups experiencing disadvantage with respect to health professions education



Grow funding for rural education and research initiatives



Undertake research that addresses the health needs of rural Australians



Download the Monash Rural Health 2023–2027 Strategic Plan at monash.edu/rural-health-strategic-plan or by scanning this code

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Monash University acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which our teaching sites stand. We pay respect to their Elders past and present.

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

In 2025, the School experienced significant change. The environment in which we, our partners and our stakeholders work in is undergoing transformation and we are not immune to its effects. In the face of such change, our School has responded and adapted well. We continue to make good progress against our Strategic Plan 2023–2027, Research Strategy 2024–2027 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework 2021–2030.

Our School is proud of the work we do in providing medical, nursing and allied health students with high-quality, immersive experiences within our regional and rural footprint. Our Regional Training Hubs continue their great work in promoting rural medical careers, supporting junior doctors and advocating for more postgraduate rural training opportunities. One of our programs in collaboration with the Gippsland Public Health Unit received a Faculty Excellence in Education Award, and a number of our students also received prestigious awards.

Other achievements include the successful shift of our DRIVERS conference from Bendigo to Gippsland for 2025. We also welcomed the appointment of Professor Belinda O’Sullivan as our Director of Research. Belinda is a nationally and internationally recognised research leader in rural health systems. Our researchers continue to engage in research around rural health workforce issues and improving rural community health outcomes.

I would like to thank our School staff, university leaders and colleagues, health service partners and key stakeholders for continuing our important work together. Enjoy reading our Year in Review 2025.



Professor Shane Bullock

Head of School
Monash Rural Health



Explore more of our achievements on our Year in Review 2025 website by visiting monash.edu/medicine/rural-health/year-in-review-2025 or by scanning this code

2025 AT A GLANCE



30%

of incoming medical students came from a rural background



70,111

nights of student accommodation provided



75

research publications



10,060

weeks of rural placements for medical, nursing and allied health students



\$1.6m+

in research grants and contract income



40

year 5D medical students took part in the First Nations Education groups across Bendigo and Mildura

EDUCATING THE RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

Building the future rural health workforce is one of our School's key goals. We work towards this by delivering immersive, high-quality educational experiences within regional and rural settings, with local community needs front of mind.

In 2025, we increased training opportunities for medical, nursing and allied health students in rural settings, and celebrated outstanding achievements within the rural health cohorts.

NEW TRAINING PATHWAY ADDRESSING RURAL DOCTOR SHORTAGE

We received funding through the Australian Government's *Building the GP Workforce* scheme to establish the Monash Mildura General Practice Academy to address the critical shortage of general practice (GPs) and rural generalists (RGs) in the region. The Academy will provide a high-quality, end-to-end, immersive training pathway for students that builds retention in the region after graduation.

The funding provides 10 Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) for the Academy program. The development allows 10 students a year to complete their four-year, graduate-entry medical degree locally, increasing the likelihood they will stay in the region.

The Mildura GP Academy is working closely with our North West Regional Training Hub as well as local health services, community partners and other stakeholders to roll out its operations. We want students to experience a range of primary care placements, get vital insight into the unique health issues of the region and feel that they are an important part of the local health workforce community.



DEAN'S AWARD CELEBRATES PIONEERING LEARNING PROGRAM

An innovative rural student placement program received the prestigious Dean's Award for Excellence: Programs that Enhance Learning.

The Gippsland-based program, developed by Monash Rural Health and the Gippsland Region Public Health Unit (GRPHU), is the first of its kind in Victoria. It provides students

with immersive, practical learning in a public health unit, allowing them to engage in multidisciplinary meetings, contribute to project-based work, and participate in professional development activities.

The program delivered tangible outcomes, with participants developing resources which are now

being used in schools and community health. It also directly addressed a long-standing gap in traditional clinical education by exposing students to public health settings.



EXPOSING MEDICAL STUDENTS TO RURAL LIFE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Monash Rural Health hosts several events to showcase healthcare careers and lifestyle opportunities that are unique to rural and regional communities.

In Gippsland, the Wildfire First Semester Clinical Skills weekend offered students hands-on learning, rural healthcare exposure and insight into the region's lifestyle. The event showcased Gippsland as an ideal location for clinical placements, featuring cutting-edge facilities and a supportive learning environment.

Students from Clayton and Churchill engaged in skill-building activities such as suturing, imaging, venepuncture, eye examinations and normal vaginal birth procedures. Students also toured Latrobe Health Service and Gippsland's rescue helicopter base.

In another week-long event, second-year students visited Monash Rural Health sites across Bendigo, Mildura and Gippsland, where they were immersed into local communities.



Students hosted the Monash Teddy Bear Hospital at schools and childcare centres, visited working farms to learn about Occupational Health and Safety challenges, and engaged in Ambulance Victoria training exercises, cultural learning and clinical simulation sessions.

These events are instrumental in educating students about rural placements and raising awareness of opportunities they may not have considered otherwise.



RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING MEDICAL STUDENTS

Ten rural health students were recognised for outstanding achievements at our prestigious Final Year Medicine Awards.

The annual awards celebrate the exceptional achievements of medical students as they transition into the healthcare system as medical professionals. Key areas of recognition are academic excellence, commitment to clinical practice, compassion in patient care, humanitarian endeavour, peer support and meaningful contributions to local and international communities.

The 2025 award recipients were:

- Lachlan John Kesting, Extended Rural Cohort Graduate Prize
- Amara Shae Vivekanantham, School of Rural Health (Churchill) Graduation Prize
- Oreoluwa Lois Segun-Beloved, Teresa Neale Award
- Lily Li, Monash Rural Health Graduate Prize
- Daniel Calvin Patchett, Dr Tim McArdle Graduate Prize



- Jordan Louise Hendy, Monash Rural Health SIP Prize
- Lily Li, End-to-End Rural Cohort (RE2E) Prize
- Daniel Calvin Patchett, Christine McMenamin Professionalism Award
- Brienna Allman, Robert Mohr Humanitarian Award
- Billy Quirk, Harriet Power Prize in Medicine



48%
of Monash medical students spent at least four weeks in a rural setting

10,060
weeks of rural placements for medical, nursing and allied health students

46
rural Scholarly Intensive Placements (SIPs)



Explore more of our education stories on our website

SUPPORTING THE RURAL MEDICAL WORKFORCE

The Monash Regional Training Hubs in Gippsland and North West Victoria optimise opportunities for medical students and junior doctors to live, work and train rurally. In 2025, our Hubs delivered a strong suite of professional development and supported initiatives for aspiring rural doctors and rural doctors in training.

Our Hubs continue to work closely with rural health services, medical colleges and local stakeholders to advocate for more rurally-based training opportunities to help attract and retain doctors in our communities.

DRIVERS COMES TO GIPPSLAND

In 2025, the Doctors for Regional Innovation, Vision, Excellence, Research and Scholarship (DRIVERS) Conference came to Gippsland for the first time, providing a forum for the next generation of rural healthcare professionals to showcase their work.

Medical students and junior doctors were invited to submit abstracts for presentation, with an impressive 86 abstracts received and 40 selected for the conference. Topics included aged care, oncology services, cultural safety in medical education, digital health and regional medical training.

Organised by the Gippsland Regional Training Hub and supported by Business Victoria, the two-day event also featured panel discussions, keynote speakers and workshops.

It brought together more than 120 medical students, junior doctors and healthcare professionals.

A pre-conference session, *NextGen Health: A hands-on exploration of health careers*, also invited high



school students to explore rural health pathways.

DRIVERS 2025 concluded with a Gala Dinner and Awards Night, acknowledging excellence in the rural health research displayed at the event.



RURAL TALENT AWARDS CELEBRATING EMERGING TALENT

Our annual Rural Talent Awards shone a spotlight on doctors across Mildura, Bendigo and Gippsland, whose commitment and leadership help strengthen rural healthcare.

The peer-nominated awards recognise interns, Hospital Medical Officers (HMOs), registrars, educators, supervisors and mentors within each region, celebrating those who choose to work in rural settings and who will become the role models and teachers of the next generation of medical students.

Among the 2025 recipients was Mildura Intern of the Year, Dr Tom Benning, who decided to stay in Mildura after being immersed into the community. Dr Benning said he had identified areas of need that he now strives to address.

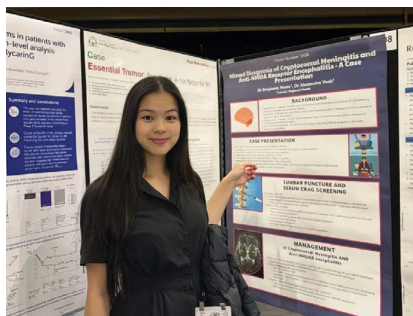


BURSARY EMPOWERING RURAL DOCTORS

The Rural Résumé Boost Bursary distributed \$12,395 between 14 junior doctors in 2025.

The bursary supports doctors who are committed to pursuing long-term careers in rural medicine. Notably, six recipients in the 2025 round intended to pursue rural General Practice or Rural Generalism, areas that are experiencing critical shortages in rural communities.

Sponsored by the Gippsland and North West Victoria Regional Training Hubs, the bursaries help rural junior doctors access training and professional development that is otherwise out of reach. Recipients



often bring back insights and resources that can be shared with peers, strengthening knowledge and training across the regions.



SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTS WELLINGTON AND EAST GIPPSLAND STUDENT

Medical student Meg Walsh received the 2025 East Gippsland Medical Scholarship, supporting her clinical placement in Bairnsdale.



Raised in Benalla and a long-term visitor to Paynesville, Meg's strong ties to East Gippsland inspired her to pursue a career as a rural GP obstetrician.

Funded by the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria, the scholarship supports senior medical students in their speciality year, who are committed to healthcare in Wellington and East Gippsland Shire.



BUILDING CLINICAL TEACHING CAPABILITIES

Stage one of the Clinical Teaching and Education Pathway (CTEP) was delivered for the first time in Woodend.

CTEP is a structured three-stage program supporting the next generation of clinical educators. Already delivered in Gippsland and north west Victoria, it gives doctors the foundational skills to effectively teach, mentor and support medical students and colleagues in busy healthcare environments.

For the first time in Woodend, stage one covered core principles of clinical education, including how to structure bedside teaching, give constructive feedback, create safe learning environments and engage learners of different levels and learning styles.



COLLEGE PATHWAYS CAREERS NIGHT

More than 65 medical students, junior doctors and local clinicians gained real-world insights into specialist training and rural career development at the 2025 College Pathways Careers Night.

The North West Victorian Regional Training Hub hosted its flagship event in Bendigo, inviting 12 doctors across a range of specialities to share their personal journeys into advanced training.

Speakers touched on Anaesthetics, Psychiatry, Intensive Care and more, and discussed how they balanced family and training commitments, and the financial realities of postgraduate training.



31

doctors completed stage one of our Clinical Teaching and Education Pathway



50%

increase in DRIVERS attendance compared to last year



14

Résumé Boost Bursaries provided to doctors



Explore more stories from the Monash Regional Training Hubs

ENGAGING WITH OUR REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

We know that working collaboratively and listening to the needs of our communities is critical to our shared successes and impact. We continue to nurture links and partnerships across our footprint, engaging with communities to strategically address some of the most pressing health and education challenges in our regions.

LEVERAGING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Third-year medical students on placement in Gippsland ran blood pressure screening in regional communities to support the global initiative, May Measurement Month.

Stationed across Sale, Traralgon and Warragul, 17 students invited members of the public to check and record their blood pressure, with deidentified results added to a global database to help understand hypertension trends and shape Gippsland's health profile.

The exercise was designed to equip students with communication and patient engagement skills while providing access to a potentially life-saving health check for members of the public.

May Measurement Month is an International Society of Hypertension initiative aiming to increase public awareness of blood pressure as a critical health indicator.



For more about May Measurement Month visit <https://www.maymeasure.org/>

MUSIC BRINGS STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The Monash Medical Orchestra concert returned for another year, bringing together a record 90 performers for a collaborative evening of jazz, classical and cinematic music.

Hosted at Federation University, Churchill, the concert involved Monash Medical Orchestra, Monash Medical Jazz Band and Kurnai College Players, drawing a crowd of 170 people.

Monash Medical Orchestra also performed a series of intimate pop-up gigs at local venues in the lead up to the concert.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP BRINGS NEW STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

A new scholarship program encouraging Monash medical students to train and work in Gippsland was introduced.

The Graeme Dyer OAM Gippsland Community Medical Scholarship provides \$6000 a year for up to three years for students who have demonstrated a commitment to healthcare in the region.

Inaugural recipients Annalise Gafa, Henry Bird and Alyssa Geiberras from Traralgon, Wonthaggi and Trafalgar respectively, entered Monash University's medical program through the Bachelor of Biomedical Science (Gippsland Partnership Program). The scholarship provided a much-needed financial boost, enabling them to support themselves while studying.

The Dyer family name is renowned in Gippsland thanks to a fourth-generation family business and Graeme's contributions to Sale City Council, the Central Gippsland Health board, Gippsland Water and the Rotary Club of Sale.



"I hope these scholarships encourage young men and women to remain in Gippsland for their studies, and to train and work here in the region, ultimately getting more medical services to rural people."

Graeme Dyer OAM



MEDICAL MUSTER INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO THE SUNRAYSA REGION

Medical students from three interstate universities came together in Broken Hill for the annual Sunraysia Collaboration Medical Muster—a vibrant program allowing rurally-based

students to experience the Sunraysia community and region.

Over several days, students toured the town, Broken Hill University

Department of Rural Health (BHURH), Silverton and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

The muster was a joint effort between BHURH and Monash Rural Health, bringing students together from Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.



Explore more of our stories on our website

CREATING IMPACT THROUGH RESEARCH

Leading rural health research is a core strategy of the Monash Rural Health Strategic Plan 2023–2027. We remain committed to delivering high-quality research that addresses critical issues affecting rural communities. In 2025, we advanced research in key areas such as obstetrics, ICU care and suicide prevention.

RISK FACTORS FOR LOW BIRTH WEIGHT IN GIPPSLAND IDENTIFIED

Gippsland research identified a range of maternal risk factors that could predict and potentially prevent low birth weights and subsequent long-term health issues.

Led by Dr Arif Kozgar from Latrobe Regional Health (LRH) and Monash Rural Health, the study was published in the journal, *Translational Pediatrics*. It analysed 2540 live births at LRH, identifying 100 babies born at or near full-term and weighing less than 2500 grams. The mothers of these babies were more likely to smoke, have a high BMI or come from a low socio-economic background.

Babies born to term but at a low birth weight are at higher risk of developing long-term health problems such as neurodevelopmental issues, diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

Researchers recommended further research and the development of public health programs to reduce risk factors for low birth weight during pregnancy.



NEW DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH TO LEAD RESEARCH STRATEGY

Monash Rural Health welcomed Professor Belinda O'Sullivan as Director of Research, marking a significant step in advancing our mission to champion high-quality, impactful research that benefits rural communities.

Professor O'Sullivan's work on rural workforce capacity, service quality and healthcare access has shaped policy and practice across the national and international landscapes.

Professor O'Sullivan and her team will lead the implementation of the Monash Rural Health Research Strategy 2024–2027.



DECADE LONG STUDY CONTRADICTS PERCEIVED GAP BETWEEN METRO AND RURAL ICU CARE

Monash Rural Health's Dr Jess Paynter concluded a marathon ten-year study into outcomes for colorectal cancer surgical patients admitted to Australian ICUs.

Published in the *Annals of Coloproctology* journal, the study's findings contradicted international data that suggested high-volume ICUs, such as those in metropolitan cities, provided better patient outcomes. Instead, Dr Paynter's research suggested that outcomes for rural ICU patients equaled those in the busier metro units. The research also found there was no difference in in-hospital mortality between metropolitan and rural hospitals.

The findings support the ongoing provision of rural ICU care.



COLLABORATION TO INTEGRATE LIVED-EXPERIENCE INTO SUICIDE PREVENTION



Monash Rural Health Associate Professor Anton Isaacs continued efforts to integrate lived-experience into suicide prevention measures by co-authoring a paper with a Darwin academic who has personal experience of suicidality.

Samantha McIntosh works in the suicide prevention sector in Darwin and, with lived experience of

suicidality, has long advocated for those who experience it to be central to prevention strategies.

A/Professor Isaacs and Ms McIntosh combined their expertise in strategy development and navigating such strategies to produce a peer-reviewed perspective paper, which was published in *The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics*. The paper delved into the challenges of suicide prevention including social stigma, careless reporting of suicide in the media, access to care and lack of understanding around helping at-risk people access support.

Since publication, A/Professor Isaacs has been interviewed on ABC Radio and, with Ms McIntosh, on ABC TV Darwin. Their work is being discussed at policy level across Australia.



\$899,726

newly awarded multi-year research grants and contracts



View the Monash Rural Health Research Strategy 2024-2027



Explore more research projects on our website



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