

The Roma Agreement: changing the face of rural generalist training in Queensland

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Aims and relevance: Queensland Health's Rural Generalist Pathway commenced as a new stream of rural training in 2007. This pathway, which has changed the face of rural medical recruitment and training across the jurisdiction, arose from a number of sentinel events relating to workforce recruitment and retention, work practices, and industrial processes, culminating in a forum in the rural town of Roma in 2005.

This seminal meeting of Queensland Health, colleges, educational providers, rural doctors and other stakeholders led to the so-called Roma Agreement, which agreed to: 'develop and sustain an integrated service and training program to form a career pathway supplying the Rural Generalist workforce that the bush needs'.

Methods and results: This agreement, which fulfilled the state government's promise of a specialist career pathway for rural generalists, developed a pathway for junior doctors (including government scholarship holders with return-of-service obligations), which was integrated with their training and linked to industrial recognition. The training program has a jurisdictional focus—supplying rural generalists to both public and private sectors. The nine principles articulated, which underpinned the pathway, are still relevant today, and are being adopted in other jurisdictions as the pathway is rolled out nationally.

Conclusion: The principles enunciated in the Roma Agreement have served the Queensland Rural Generalist Pathway well. But does everyone need such an agreement? This paper will explore with the audience:

- Would similar agreements be useful in their own context? How would they work?
- Who are their stakeholders and communities of interest?
- What are the key lessons from this experience?

Target audience: This paper/workshop presentation will be relevant for anyone interested in rural medical/health professional education, including educators, policy makers and rural clinicians.