

# COVID-19

# RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

## Media release

Friday 24 April 2020

### Golden opportunity to make rural health better

With thoughts turning to how Australia might adapt to a post-COVID world, rural doctors say the pandemic response could provide the tools for better access to healthcare in the bush.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has been an incredibly awful time for millions of people, and has caused enormous suffering and disruption,” said **Dr Adam Coltzau, Clinical Lead of the COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response**.

“But as we adjust to life with SARS-Cov-2, there have been significant learnings from the policies applied in the response that could add value in the long term.

“We urge governments and policy-makers not to simply discard what has worked well during the pandemic as we adjust to a new ‘normal’ in healthcare delivery.

“Instead, we need to make this innovation an integral part of how the health system works in the future.

“Top of the list for rural communities has been the increased use of telehealth, as it has made it much easier for many patients to access the care they need.

“COVID-19 has demonstrated just how effective telehealth can be for a wide range of consultations, particularly in the rural and remote context,” Dr Coltzau said.

“More complex treatments have been able to be provided locally, such as receiving chemotherapy with the assistance of a distant oncologist providing advice to a well-trained local doctor or nurse.

“As the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted there is a huge opportunity for service redesign to provide greater access to a multitude of local health services for people in the bush.

“We have seen how we can boost access to local health services, but it also requires a continued drive to attract and retain more GPs and Rural Generalists in rural and remote communities to provide the essential, hands-on care.

“The National Rural Generalist Training Pathway, which was well under-way prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, has never been more important to the future of rural healthcare.

“We look forward to being able to focus on the rollout of this program again after the current restrictions are eased.”

Find more information on how to protect yourself, your family and community from COVID-19 at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).

---

# COVID-19

# RURAL AND REMOTE RESPONSE

**A high resolution photo of Dr Adam Coltzau is available here:**

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/712>

**A high resolution photo of ACRRM President, Dr Ewen McPhee, is available here:**

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/968>

**A high resolution photo of RDAA President, Dr John Hall, is available here:**

<https://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/687>

**Available for interview:**

Dr Adam Coltzau - Clinical Lead, RDAA and ACRRM COVID-19 Rural and Remote Response

Dr John Hall - RDAA President

Dr Ewen McPhee - ACRRM President

**Media contacts (RDAA)**

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890

Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638

**Media contacts (ACRRM)**

Petrina Smith on 0414 820 847

ACRRM National Office on 1800 223 226