

Abstract

Enabling successful transition of dental graduates to regional and remote practice through curriculum design and clinical practice

[Multi-disciplinary primary healthcare practice in remote and very remote Australia](#)

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The Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) at James Cook University (JCU) was established in 2009 as a socially accountable program with the mission to address the population health needs and workforce shortages of rural, remote and tropical Australia. This presentation will focus on how aligning curriculum design and clinical experiences enables and encourages transition to graduate careers in rural, remote and regional areas.

An ongoing process of evaluation involving data gathered from participatory action research, student feedback surveys, clinical partners, and graduates has informed development of the innovative curriculum design of the JCU program. The rural and remote focus is embedded into the dental curriculum across the pre-clinical and clinical years. In addition to clinical and cultural competency, the course prepares dental graduates for interdisciplinary teamwork in rural and remote practice. This pioneering dental program also embeds education on domestic violence (DV-RRR) and authentic medical emergency simulations. Final year students complete extended clinical placements in rural and remote communities; this is essential if graduates are to feel comfortable and competent to join the remote health workforce.

Ongoing feedback is informing program design and delivery to optimise engagement and preparedness for practice. With student input, learning opportunities and clinical experiences can prepare 'fit for purpose' graduates whose distinctive profile and capabilities enable them for transition to the rural and remote workforce. Destination data and GIS mapping of graduate destinations reveals the significant contribution JCU dental graduates have made to the rural and remote oral health workforce since 2013. However, given the given the challenge of funding rural and remote student placements, further research is required to evaluate the impact of the current policy and budgetary environment on the viability of the

current curriculum. This may reduce the capacity to continue contributing work-ready graduates to the future rural health workforce.

Biography:

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Felicity is a Senior Lecturer in Dentistry at JCU who is passionate about growing socially accountable health professionals who are 'fit for purpose' for regional and remote practice. She is actively involved in applied research on rural oral health, domestic violence, and graduate preparedness for rural practice. Felicity has initiated and established work integrated placements for students. With the first dental cohort graduating in 2013, Felicity has evaluated four years of final year students' intentions and the impact of rural and remote experiences on graduate destinations.

[Previous article Indigenous Engagement for Students](#)

[Next article The Flying Doctor 90 years on](#)

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