



Media Release



Joint media release
27 October 2025

Maple syrup and vegemite firmly on menu, as Australian and Canadian rural doctors sign landmark MOU

- Knowledge sharing on policies, strategies and solutions for stronger rural health sectors in both countries
- Reciprocal benefits for members of Australian and Canadian peak rural doctor bodies

The peak bodies for Australia's and Canada's rural doctors – the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (SRPC) – have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding that will see the two organisations working closely together to benefit rural doctors and the communities they serve on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

The MOU was signed last Friday by outgoing RDAA President **Dr RT Lewandowski** and SRPC President **Dr Gavin Parker**, in the presence of (now) RDAA President **Dr Sarah Chalmers** and SRPC President-elect **Dr Sarah Giles** at the Rural Medicine Australia 2025 conference in Perth.

Dr Lewandowski said: "I am truly excited to have signed this MOU on behalf of RDAA, and formalised an already very productive relationship between our two organisations, in one of my last duties as RDAA President.

"Despite the physical distance between our countries, RDAA and the SRPC are closely aligned in our philosophies, in our approaches to policy and advocacy with our respective governments, and in the rural and remote healthcare challenges that our members and their communities face.

"Our countries have significant similarities in terms of geographical challenges due to the remoteness of healthcare settings, similar health policy and funding models, and similar challenges in training and

recruiting more health professionals to work in our rural, remote and Indigenous communities – so it will be very beneficial for us to share ideas and solutions on all of these challenges.

“We may even organise to gift the occasional bottle of maple syrup and jar of vegemite at our future meetings, and I’m sure our discussions will also touch on our respective sporting codes – notwithstanding that Canada’s national sporting league works a lot better on ice than ours.”

SRPC President, Dr Gavin Parker, said: “Following what has been a close relationship between our organisations over many years, we are delighted to now be formalising that relationship with our Australian colleagues and friends through this landmark MOU.

“We’re excited to build on the many strengths shared by our rural and remote health communities in Canada and Australia. While our settings present unique challenges, they also inspire innovation, resilience, and a deep sense of purpose. Through this collaboration, we look forward to learning from one another, celebrating what’s working well, and building on those successes to strengthen rural medicine in both our countries.

“To see this come to fruition is very rewarding.”

Under the MOU, free reciprocal ‘associate’ membership will be provided to rural doctors, registrars, medical students and other RDAA and SRPC members, unlocking a range of member benefits including the ability to participate in each organisation’s Special Interest Groups, receive regular information and policy updates, and receive discounted registration to each other’s national conference.

Both organisations will have the opportunity to provide a plenary address at the other’s national conference, and a meeting will be facilitated with Board representatives from both RDAA and SRPC in attendance at those conferences to discuss shared goals and opportunities.

RDAA and SRPC will also facilitate meetings with key representatives from their respective national Departments of Health, in order to gather and share insights into rural and remote health service delivery and innovative models of care.

The MOU comes at a time when there has been increasing flow of Australian and Canadian rural doctors and medical students between medical conferences and other events in each country, including the organisations’ own annual conferences.

Available for interview:

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