



DOCS CONNECT

SWAN HILL'S REGIONAL ROUND-UP: A TURNING POINT FOR REGIONAL MEDICINE IN VICTORIA DR ANNEMARIE NEWTH WRITES

There are events that feel like milestones—and then there are events that change the game entirely. The recent Connecting the Docs Regional Round-Up in Swan Hill was both.

Held in partnership with Murray PHN, RACGP, GPSA, RWAV, and the Victorian Rural Generalist Program (VRGP), this two-day gathering on April 10–11 brought together the full spectrum of our regional healthcare community: medical students, junior doctors, GP registrars, supervisors, health leaders—and just as importantly, their families. The result was powerful. What we saw in Swan Hill was more than a successful event, it was a clear sign of what's possible when we lead with connection.

Connecting the Docs began in the Loddon Mallee with a simple but vital goal: not just to attract doctors to rural placements, but to keep them. We knew the missing piece wasn't clinical experience—it was community. Doctors needed support, mentorship, and a real sense of belonging if we wanted them to stay. And now, we're seeing that vision take root. One moment, in particular, stood out to me. A junior doctor turned to me and said, "I didn't realise rural medicine could look like this." That comment said everything. This is exactly why we built Connecting the Docs—to challenge old assumptions and show that regional medicine can be dynamic, rewarding, and deeply connected to purpose and place.

The response since the Swan Hill event has been nothing short of extraordinary. We've heard from health services across the state, all asking the same question: "How can we be part of this?" There's a real appetite now for a unified, people-first approach to recruitment and retention—one that looks beyond contracts and placements, and instead focuses on the lived experience of doctors and their families.

As Chair Kellie Byron-Gray put it so well, this isn't just a program, it's a movement. We are not only connecting doctors to jobs—we are connecting them to community, lifestyle, and the kind of support that makes them want to stay and grow.

We are excited to say that this event was just one of many. Connecting the Docs will continue to host events like the Regional Round-Up across Victoria—bringing people together, sparking new connections, and building momentum for the future of rural medicine. With growing interest from health services and organisations across the state, our program is thriving—and only gaining speed.

To our current participants: we invite you to extend the welcome even further. If you know someone who's considering regional practice, please share our job directory and help us move more amazing doctors and their families into this incredible region. Every introduction, every connection, every welcome matters.

Our progress so far has been inspiring—but we're only just getting started. With your support, we're creating a future where rural medicine isn't a compromise—it's a first choice. I look forward to building the most amazing community and continuing building on what we have already established.

Dr Annemarie Newth
Connecting the Docs



REGIONAL UPDATES

Let us give you a snapshot of what's been happening across our region and local communities

Lights, Camera, Connection!

Connecting the Docs is thrilled to announce our latest investment in a dynamic multimedia campaign —bringing real stories, real people, and real impact to life!

With the incredible support of our team, we're expanding our digital presence through a dedicated YouTube channel, where we'll be rolling out a series of short-form videos, interviews, and behind-the-scenes glimpses into the heart of rural and regional healthcare.

First up, we're proud to share a very special feature: Dr. Annemarie Newth steps behind the camera to reflect on her inspiring journey and her connection with the Connecting the Docs community. Her passion, insight, and warmth shine through as she shares what makes working in regional healthcare so meaningful. **Watch now and stay tuned—there's so much more to come!**

<https://www.youtube.com/@ConnectingTheDocsRc/>



Swan Hill Community U Inc has been a part of our region since 2004. Over the past 21 years alone, they've generously donated more than \$150,000 to support the Swan Hill community — with many of those contributions directly benefiting SHDH. They have recently made a donation to SHDH to go towards a much-needed Airvo3 Machine for our Acute Ward. This respiratory device delivers warmed and humidified air or oxygen to patients, making it easier for them to breathe — a critical support for many in our care. Our current machine is due for an upgrade, and thanks to Community U, we can now move forward with replacing it.



Healthy
Eating
Advisory
Service

The Excellence in Collaboration award

Congratulations to East Wimmera Health Service who were presented the Excellence in Collaboration award by Dr David Lister, Deputy Chief Health Officer at the Virtual Health Services Awards earlier this week! The Excellence in Collaboration award was presented to East Wimmera Health Service for successfully uniting multiple menus across different sites to implement the Healthy choices: policy directive seamlessly. Their commitment to teamwork and staff engagement ensured a cohesive and effective approach.

Over the Easter break, our Connecting the Docs communities came together to celebrate with locals across our regional towns. From family-friendly events to cultural celebrations, our doctors were right there in the heart of it all—connecting, sharing, and building strong ties within the communities they serve. It's moments like these that remind us why regional healthcare is so special.



Echuca Regional Health held its first ANZAC Commemoration Service for patients and staff. A heartfelt thank you to those in the community family for organising this special tribute - the efforts are truly appreciated by our entire community.

KEY PARTNERS

