

Rural Generalist Pathway

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Position Title	Senior Medical Officer (Provisional Fellow)
Location	Roma
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I'm writing this from a hotel in Chicago. This was certainly not one of the places I thought the Rural Generalist Pathway would take me, but the anaesthesia and intensive resuscitation series offered here this week has deepened my knowledge and better prepared me for the challenges of Roma Hospital. From the bustle of Chicago to the serenity of Roma...

With the dozen or so jet-props flying overhead each day to supply Roma with its gas field workforce, it sometimes seems like our backyard needs a few greyhounds (instead of our two labradoodles) to better resemble the Kerrigan's Castle. But it didn't take long for my wife and I to appreciate this ever-present link to the outside world. Our friends actually visit and, with flexible rosters, a long weekend trip to Brisbane is never far away.

Roma has become for us more a haven than a place to escape. Life is refreshingly simple here. It's just a seven minute walk to work, and my wife and I have more time to relax and appreciate life. If it's not too busy at the hospital, I walk home so that we can have lunch together. There may not be as much here as in a city, but we can still get a good coffee, a great meal, the perfect pint of Kilkenny, and watch a movie at the cinema.



Working as a Rural Generalist in Roma, is both challenging and rewarding in its variety.

A typical week kicks off with a handover meeting, a presentation by a keen student, then straight into the ED or ward rounds. The ED here has a host of presentations and more than its fair share of minor trauma and eye injuries from the gas camps (you quickly refine skills with a slit lamp!). Multi-trauma MVAs, intubating and transferring patients, and working up febrile paediatric patients are among some of the challenges here. Help is never more than a phone call away, and consultants in Brisbane will commend you on performing a successful LP or intubating and stabilising a patient ready for transfer. Ophthalmologists, dermatologists, rheumatologists, endocrinologists, neurologists, radiologists, neurosurgeons, orthopaedic surgeons, and paediatricians are among the many specialists who have happily provided me with immediate advice on managing complex patients. Ward rounds allow for continuity of care and the opportunity to address a wide variety of medical challenges - including the demands and rewards of palliative care. There is a great team of doctors, nurses, and allied health here at Roma, ever-ready to lend a hand or give some advice. I am well supported by our Med Super, who is always at the other end of the phone if needed.

I spend each Wednesday at the local Aboriginal Medical Service where I provide preventative health care services and try and negotiate the newly familiar Medicare items and practice software. At the end of the day, I visit a local Medical centre for GP education - a great time to keep in touch with some of the other doctors in town.

At any time during the week, there may be an elective or emergency C-section, an appendicectomy, or removal of ectopic pregnancy – with GP obstetricians, a surgeon and a gynaecologist in town there is ample opportunity to practice regional and general anaesthesia. A dental list helps me maintain skills in nasal intubation, and an ophthalmology list the chance to advance my skills in regional blockade of the eye under expert supervision. The opportunities for a budding GP obstetrician are equally diverse here.

Friday begins with another handover and pre-admission clinic. The challenge of providing safe anaesthesia out here is ever-present in my mind, and this is where it starts. Educating the medical students and in turn being educated by my excellent supervisor round off a great week (informal education occurs throughout the week - whether for me by the parade of experienced locums, or by me as I teach our very helpful students.)

By Friday evening, I admit I'm grateful that I have most weekends off. One in seven on call for ED is very workable, and the anaesthetic on call roster does more to reduce my alcohol intake than increase my hours. The learning opportunities in Roma are incredible, I'm remunerated very generously, and the responsibility and demands of this job obliterate any thoughts of boredom or complacency. If you want to be a true generalist, this is the job for you.

*The Rural Generalist Pathway has defined what
has been a very rewarding journey for me as a doctor.
I'm now in Roma, doing what I was trained to do and loving it!*