



2026 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN RURAL HEALTH EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Media Statement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Excellence in Rural Health Celebrated Across Western Australia: winners announced for the 2026 WA Rural Health Excellence Awards

The exceptional achievements of Western Australia's rural and remote health workforce were celebrated over the weekend, with the announcement of the 2026 WA Rural Health Excellence Awards winners at a prestigious gala event.

Presented annually by Rural Health West in partnership with WA Country Health Service (WACHS), the awards recognise outstanding individuals and teams who demonstrate excellence, leadership and innovation in delivering healthcare to regional, rural and remote communities across the state.

This year's award recipients span nearly every region of Western Australia, reinforcing the depth and breadth of expertise, commitment and compassion that underpin rural healthcare statewide.

The 2026 WA Rural Health Excellence Awards winners are:

- **Aboriginal Health Professional of the Year: *Vernon Dann (Kimberley)***
- **Allied Health Professional of the Year: *Kathryn Braysich (Midwest)***
- **Clinical Leader of the Year: *Kim Tracey (South West)***
- **Community Health Professional of the Year: *Sarah Youngson (South West)***
- **General Practitioner of the Year: *Richard Taylor (Midwest)***
- **Health Team of the Year: *WACHS Older Person Complex Care Team (South West)***
- **Nurse or Midwife of the Year: *Jane Darlington (Kimberley)***
- **Specialist (non-GP) of the Year: *Jacinta Cover (South West)***

- **Young Professional of the Year: *Rosalie Gent (Goldfields)***
- **WA Country Health Service Intern of the Year: *Celia Wong (Midwest)***
- **WA Country Health Service Resident Medical Officer of the Year: *Catherine Daly (South West)***
- **Chairs' Award: *WACHS Older Person Complex Care Team (South West)***

Across all categories, the winners shared common themes of innovation, cultural connection, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to addressing the unique health challenges faced by rural and remote communities. Their work spans culturally safe care, chronic disease management, outreach services and the effective use of telehealth to improve access and outcomes.

Notably, 2026 marks a milestone year for Dr Sarah Youngson, who was recognised as both Community Health Professional of the Year and as a 20-Year Long Service Award recipient last month, highlighting a career defined by both enduring commitment and ongoing excellence in rural health.

WA Country Health Service Older Person Complex Care Team (OPCC) in the South West was honoured in 2026 with both the Chairs' Award and Health Team of the Year, a powerful acknowledgement of a team delivering extraordinary care in some of the most complex and vulnerable circumstances. Supporting more than 600 older people across the region, their work exemplifies compassion in action whilst safeguarding dignity, preventing crisis, and ensuring older Western Australians remain safe, supported and heard.

WA Country Health Service Chief Executive Jeff Moffet said the winners represented the compassion, courage and ingenuity that country health clinicians were renowned for.

"These awards do an excellent job of highlighting some of the exceptionally dedicated and community-focused health professionals across rural and remote WA," Jeff said.

"They serve to remind us that delivering high-quality, equitable care in rural communities requires not only skill but a true commitment to the people in their care.

"This year's winners and finalists are outstanding examples of how innovation, teamwork, and perseverance can make a real and lasting difference to country communities."

Rural Health West Chief Executive Professor Catherine Elliott said the awards highlight the critical role rural health professionals play in community wellbeing.

"The WA Rural Health Excellence Awards celebrate the people who are driving meaningful change in healthcare across regional and remote Western Australia.

"From frontline clinicians to multidisciplinary teams, these winners demonstrate professionalism, creativity, and unwavering dedication," Catherine said.

“Their work strengthens communities, inspires colleagues, and highlights the vital role rural healthcare plays in building healthier, more connected regions across our state.”

The WA Rural Health Excellence Awards reflect the shared commitment of Rural Health West and WA Country Health Service in recognising and supporting the workforce that delivers vital health services to communities across rural and remote WA.

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Media enquiries:

WA Country Health Service Media – 0467 499 525

Lynn Loganathan, Rural Health West – 0434 396 500

Rural Health West aims to improve access to quality healthcare for rural communities through the provision of a highly skilled, motivated and sustainable medical and allied health workforce. We are a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.