



RDAQ 2026

Stockyards & Stethoscopes

MEDICINE IN THE HEART OF QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

25 June 2026

Rural medicine takes centre stage in Cairns

From stockyards to stethoscopes - healthcare in rural Queensland is shaped by the landscapes, the people, and life beyond the clinic.

This powerful connection will take centre stage at the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (RDAQ)'s sold out annual conference in Far North Queensland today.

Over 500 attendees including clinicians and their families, doctors in training, medical students, policymakers, stakeholders, consumer advocates and health leaders have converged on Cairns for the three-day event.

RDAQ President Dr David Walker said the conference was an opportunity for education, connection and advocacy under the theme 'Stockyards & Stethoscopes – Medicine in the Heart of Queensland.'

"You can't separate rural health from rural life and the past 12 months have been challenging for rural and remote medicine and communities," Dr Walker said.

"Rural healthcare is deeply interconnected. When one part becomes fragile, the entire system feels the impact," he said.

"Cost-of-living pressures are intensifying these challenges, with patients facing rising costs while services continue to experience workforce shortages," he said.

"Despite this, rural communities remain resilient, driven by committed clinicians and strong local leadership."

The RDAQ2026 three-day program will explore the clinical and systemic challenges facing agricultural communities, alongside opportunities to strengthen care across rural and remote Queensland.

The conference will officially get underway tonight with a standout opening keynote to be delivered by internationally recognised farmer health expert, Affiliate Professor Sue Brumby, presenting 'Paddock to patient: from farm realities to healthcare'.

The opening night program will also feature a spotlight session by Cairns-based emergency physician & clinical toxicologist Dr Mark Little on agrichemical poisoning, alongside the popular RDAQ Great Debate examining whether rural healthcare should be designed differently to metropolitan systems.

Convenor Dr Anneliese Slack said this year's theme reflected the unique and often complex environments rural doctors practice in.

“Rural healthcare demands a deep understanding of the environments our patients live and work in,” Dr Slack said.

“RDAQ2026 shines a spotlight on those realities while equipping clinicians with the knowledge, networks and confidence to deliver the highest quality care in the bush,” she said.

“RDAQ is renowned as a conference like no other, and RDAQ2026 will not disappoint. It’s an event with a legendary reputation - not just for its high-quality education and networking, but for its welcoming atmosphere and the camaraderie that makes rural medicine so special.”

The conference is being held at Pullman Cairns International from Thursday 25 to Saturday 27 June 2026, and will conclude with the annual RDAQ Awards, presented at the David Horn Memorial Gala Ball on Saturday evening.

Thursday, 25 June 2026

RDAQ Pre-conference Workshops:

- 7.45am – 2.15pm Doctors in Training Rural Clinical Skills (in partnership with QRGP)
- 7.45am – 3.45pm Advanced Procedural Obstetrics Workshop (provided by HWQ)
- 8.15am – 3.15pm RACGP Supervisor Continuing Professional Development (provided by RACGP)

Conference welcome & opening plenary:

5pm – 7.10pm

- Spotlight: When agrichemicals result in poisoning – Dr Mark Little
- The Great Debate: One system, two mindsets – should rural healthcare be designed differently to metropolitan care?
- Keynote address: Paddock to patient: from farm realities to healthcare – Affiliate Professor Sue Brumby

View full program [HERE](#)

Media Contact

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Media – register your attendance media@rdaq.com.au

All media must sign in at registration desk on arrival