

MEDIA RELEASE

22 June 2024

The winding road from travel agent to RDAQ President

Newly appointed Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (RDAQ) President Dr Danielle Allan has been inaugurated at the organisation's AGM this morning.

Dr Allan took the back roads to medicine and has encountered more than her fair share of flooded crossings and fallen trees along the way.

Born in the Western Suburbs of Sydney but living rurally in Northern NSW and Queensland for over 25 years, she describes herself as a city chick who prefers rural life.

Until recently she was the clinical director of Rural Medicine, and SMO at Esk Hospital, a Rural Generalist with advanced skills in Paediatrics & Child Health, a local GP.

But Medicine is her third career - she was a travel agent for more than a decade until the September 11 attacks when she decided to become a nurse - because she believed she wasn't smart enough to be a doctor.

"My dad was diagnosed with terminal Bowel Cancer just as I finished my nursing degree and his dying wish for me was that I sit the GAMSAT (Graduate Medical School Admissions Test), he said it didn't matter if I passed or failed, it was about not dying wondering.

"So as per his wishes I sat the GAMSAT, passed and was accepted into medicine."

From the moment she entered Med School Danielle was always going to be a rural doctor knowing full well the challenges and benefits that came with it.

But in her intern year another crater in the road, her mum was diagnosed with aggressive Breast Cancer. Three years after her initial diagnosis her mum sadly died of radiation induced Lung Cancer.

"I cared for my mum in those last few weeks, and I struggled with the lack of healthcare supports available even though I was medically trained, and we were in the city. I can only imagine how other families would struggle with little help or knowledge.

"I was extremely close to Mum, so it was a huge loss for me, but I do believe that I am a more compassionate and caring doctor for my patients because of these experiences, and I am also a better human."

In September 2022 life was going great personally and professionally for Dr Allan when, this time, the bush road became dangerously rocky.

She was diagnosed with Stage 3 Renal Cell Carcinoma which extended into the right renal vein and was partially blocking the inferior vena cava.

Unfortunately following surgery, she suffered from side effects to the follow up immunotherapy and ended up with immune mediated nephritis and severe immune mediated colitis.

“I still suffer from extreme fatigue and concentration issues, and it has taken me 18 months to start back at work albeit not in a clinical role,” Dr Allan said.

“I’m currently struggling with the idea that I may never get back to my pre-cancer work capabilities and may need to take a different turn down this bumpy road,” she said.

“But everything that’s happened so far has influenced me and led me to where I am today, proudly taking on the role as RDAQ President.

“I have seen the other side of medicine in a rural context as a carer, a nurse, a doctor and as a patient.

“Medicine for me is about helping others and ensuring that our communities receive the best care as close to home as they can.

“It shouldn’t matter where you live or how much money you have – equity in healthcare provision should be a priority for every government.”

Dr David Walker (Longreach) was elected as President-elect.

2024-2025 RDAQ Management Committee

Executive

President	Dr Danielle Allan - Esk
President-elect	Dr David Walker - Longreach
Treasurer	Dr Ulrich Orda – Mt Isa
Secretary	Dr Felicity Constable - Toowoomba

Management committee

Dr Gabrielle Keating – Mt Isa
Dr Rebecca Lyon – Toowoomba
Dr Elizabeth Clarkson – Theodore
Dr Bek Adams - Kingaroy
Dr June Brundell – Pilton
Prof. Tarun Sen Gupta – Townsville
Dr Matt Masel - Goondiwindi
Dr David Molhoek – Warwick

Photos attached:

RDAQ President Dr Danielle Allan, RDAQ Immediate Past President Alex Dunn
2024-2025 Management Committee

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