

Evaluation of the Murray Darling Medical Schools Network**BACKGROUND**

The Department of Health and Aged Care (the Department) engaged Healthcare Management Advisors (HMA) to

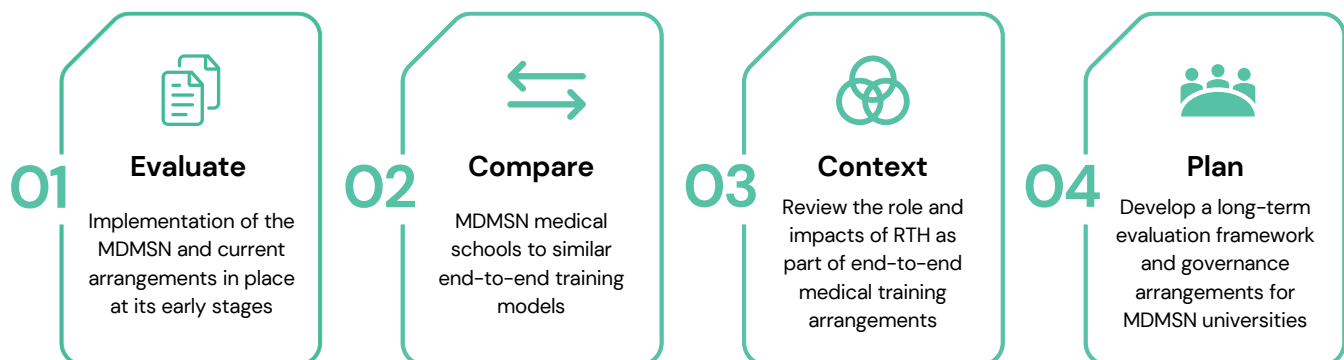
Undertake an implementation evaluation of the Murray Darling Medical Schools Network and develop an outcomes evaluation framework to be embedded into the programs of all participating universities.

The Murray Darling Medical Schools Network (MDMSN) has been established under the Stronger Rural Health Strategy to provide end-to-end medical training in rural areas of New South Wales and Victoria. The MDMSN end-to-end approach is based on evidence that access to rural training programs increases retention of doctors in rural areas, and builds on learnings about appropriate student selection processes and training strategies. The MDMSN comprises medical schools from five universities: University of Sydney (USyd), University of NSW (UNSW), Charles Sturt University (CSU), Monash University and University of Melbourne (UoM).

PROJECT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The scope of the MDMSN evaluation and framework development is to undertake a deep dive into the implementation of the MDMSN in the broader context of Regional Training Hubs (RTHs) and other end-to-end medical training programs in rural Australia (i.e. those used by James Cook University, University of Queensland and Flinders University NT). In addition, the project will establish an evaluation framework to be embedded into the programs of all universities participating in the MDMSN as a means for ongoing evaluation.

There are four key elements to the MDMSN evaluation and framework development, as shown below.



An Expert Reference Group will also be established to provide guidance throughout the project.

KEY CONTACTS**Healthcare Management Advisors**

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PROJECT METHOD OUTLINE

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	TIMING	METHOD
Project initiation	Defining project scope and objectives.	July 2023	-
Situation analysis	Background information to provide context to the program, the rural health medical training eco-system and relevant policy.	September 2023	Desktop review
Implementation Evaluation Plan	An evaluation plan for the implementation of the MDMSN will be prepared based on the situational analysis.	September 2023	Desktop
Comparator site visits	Consultation with key medical school staff at universities offering end-to-end medical student training in regional / rural areas: Flinders University NT, James Cook University and University of Queensland. Focus: learnings from the operations of the end-to-end training program and identify key barriers and enablers to implementation.	November 2023 June 2024	Face-to-face and videoconference interviews
Regional Training Hubs visits	Consultation with Regional Training Hubs staff. Focus: RTH program operations, duplication of effort, barriers and enablers and other learnings that may provide context for the MDMSN evaluation.	March–May 2024 August–Sept 2024	Face-to-face and videoconference interviews
Case study site visits with universities participating in the Murray Darling Medical School Network	Consultation with medical school executives, academic and teaching staff and students. In addition, other stakeholders in the catchment will also be consulted including Regional Training Hubs, Primary Health Networks, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Hospitals and consumers. Focus: operation and integration of the end-to-end program in each catchment, enablers and barriers and data / reporting requirements.	March–June 2024	Face-to-face and videoconference interviews Survey and focus groups with staff and students Focus groups with consumers
Broader stakeholder consultation	Consultation with medical education bodies, prevocational and vocational training bodies, peak bodies and community advisory groups. Focus: Perspectives on the use of end-to-end programs, the network approach and integration with existing programs.	August–September 2024	Videoconference and round table discussions
Implementation Evaluation Findings	A report on the learnings and future recommendations regarding the implementation of the MDMSN will be prepared.	October 2024	Desktop
Data scoping exercise	Undertake a scoping of data sources that will be available for use by the universities for future outcomes evaluation activities. This will include consultation with data custodians such the FRAME Federation of Rural Australian Medical Educators, Australian Rural Health Education Network and Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand.	August–October 2024	Videoconference
Develop Outcomes Evaluation Framework	In consultation with participating universities, an outcome evaluation framework will be developed that outlines future evaluation cities to be undertaken. This will include support for universities to establish the implementation of the evaluation framework.	November 2024–May 2025	Face-to-face and online workshops