



## TRIBUTE

### Tribute to Professor Denese Playford

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## FULL ARTICLE:



**Professor Denese Playford**

Many of us were fortunate to know and work with Professor Denese Playford, who died on 15 March 2022. With qualifications in health, education and theology, Denese had a heart for students and was a gifted teacher. She combined that with expertise and academic capacity to deliver the evidence we needed about the many impacts of rural programs, with her expertise recognised internationally.

It was a great privilege to have worked with Denese over the years. She was one of the most thoughtful, humble and tenacious rural health academics that we have ever met. Denese had a longstanding commitment to and extensive experience in rural health through her research leadership in the Rural Clinical School of Western Australia (RCSWA). Extending across thousands of kilometres, the RCSWA has one of the largest geographical regions in the world.

Denese's work has positioned Australia at the forefront of research into health workforce and innovation in rural health education. Denese developed the Graduate Certificate in Rural and Remote Medicine and initiated an innovative, student-led evaluation process in the MD program.

Denese's publications spanned the fields of rural health, workforce and medical education and she was at the forefront in research on the rural health workforce nationally. She was a much appreciated Associate Editor for this journal's Australasian section. Her publications collectively have produced a substantial body of research on the value of medical education in the rural context. Denese's research has made an impact internationally as

demonstrated by extensive citations. Her work has underpinned much of the advocacy and opportunity that the Federation of Australian Medical Educators has been able to make.

Denese had wide-ranging experience in teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Denese's work has enabled the RCSWA to become well known for innovation and high-quality education and training for students who learn how to deliver high-quality services in underserved communities within multidisciplinary healthcare teams in rural, remote or Indigenous primary care settings. Hundreds of Denese's students have been changing the future of healthcare delivery thanks to her commitment to teaching and learning.

Denese was recognised by her peers as a role model for academics and health professionals. This innovation and sustained excellence in her field was recognised with a national citation for outstanding contribution for student learning in 2017 and an international award from the Higher Education Academy in 2020. The field of rural health is important to the ongoing success of universities in serving rural communities through teaching students and producing internationally renowned researchers like Denese. We will continue to look for opportunities to remember Denese, and we send our condolences to her friends, colleagues and family.

**Professor Jenny May, Department of Rural Health, University of Newcastle**

**Professor Jennene Greenhill, Chair, Discipline of Nursing, Southern Cross University**