Rethinking Law Curriculum
Preparing law graduates for practice in rural and regional Australia

Offering law schools a cost-effective opportunity to contribute to resolving issues of recruitment and retention in the rural and regional legal profession.

Rural and regional practice exposes graduates to a broad and professionally rewarding range of legal issues, including opportunities to assume greater practice responsibilities much earlier in their careers. However, it does not come without its challenges.

Research into other rural and regional professions e.g. teaching and medicine has discovered that universities are well positioned to address attraction and retention issues for rural and regional professionals, through undergraduate curriculum designed to engage actively with students and prepare them for careers within the rural and regional context.

In recognition of the opportunity for universities to better prepare law graduates for employment in rural and regional areas, academics from six Australian institutions joined together to create a curriculum package specifically designed to sensitise students to the realities of rural and regional legal practice, and to equip them with some of the skills essential to living and working as a lawyer in rural and regional communities.

“Many law firms and community legal centres are unable to find suitable lawyers to fill vacancies when they arise and are being impeded by the drain of corporate knowledge caused by a constant turnover of staff. There is also evidence to suggest that this situation will deteriorate further in the next five to ten years as a large number of experienced principals retire.”


Research Team Funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching
Curriculum Package

The curriculum package is an open-educational resource, which may be re-used for free in teaching under a creative commons licence. This enables legal academics to easily increase student awareness of the unique practice environments in rural and regional Australia, and to equip them with some of the skills necessary to overcome challenges and take advantage of opportunities.

The collective learning outcomes of the package or students include:

1. Define and describe the diverse legal practice contexts distinctive to rural and regional communities;
2. Identify ethically sound strategies to respond to rural and regional legal practice;
3. Demonstrate an awareness of the rural and regional legal career opportunities and identify strategies to live and work in a rural context; and
4. Formulate and identify commercial and managerial skills required for an innovative and dynamic rural and regional legal practice.

To assist students in achieving these learning outcomes, eight separate modules explore specific aspects of rural and regional legal practice.

Features

- Suitable to be taught as a stand-alone unit/subject of the eight interlinked modules.
- Can be easily separated into discrete modules to be incorporated within existing units of study.
- Individual elements of any module can be used within existing units.
- Incorporates instructions to educators which provide guidance as to how each module may be modified.
- Combines theoretical discussion with examples from practice.

Visit www.rrlen.net.au to find out more

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