

Other professionals

Nurses and nurse practitioners:

Nurses are the most common health practitioner in rural Australia. Mental health patients may be treated by registered nurses or more specialised mental health nurses. Nurses in rural areas often have broader expertise and higher levels of autonomy than nurses in the city.

In some places, you may work with nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners have additional clinical training and, within certain clinical guidelines, are able to initiate diagnostic investigations, prescribe medication and make limited referrals.

General practitioners: While there is a shortage of general practitioners in rural areas, they are still the most common type of doctor. Their responsibilities often include things outside the usual scope of general practice, including mental health treatment.

Allied health:

A broad range of allied health professionals work in rural areas. Those most likely to be working in mental health are psychologists and social workers. Allied health professionals in rural areas tend to operate in visiting multidisciplinary teams.

Aboriginal health workers / aboriginal mental health workers:

In areas with Aboriginal communities, you are likely to work with Aboriginal health workers. They perform a variety of tasks, from cultural brokering and interpreting to education and health promotion to direct clinical care and provision of traditional healing. Titles can vary (e.g. community worker, liaison worker, women's / men's health worker, health promotion officer), as can the extent of training they have received.

Psychiatrists and other specialists:

Compared to the cities, you will find fewer specialists in rural areas and fewer private specialists in particular. Many towns will not support specialist services at all. Among psychiatrists, only one third of the rural workforce actually live in rural Australia – the rest travel in from cities or use telepsychiatry. Access to particularly specialised disciplines, such as Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, is very infrequent.