CRANA plus

improving remote health



ANNUAL REPORT 2025/2026

THE PEAK PROFESSIONAL BODY FOR THE REMOTE AND ISOLATED HEALTH WORKFORCE

crana.org.au

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This training and professional support for the Remote Health Workforce Program received grant funding from the Australian Government.



CRANAplus acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, waters and sky, and respects their enduring spiritual connection to Country. We acknowledge the sorrow of the past and our hope and belief that we can move to a place of equity, partnership and justice together. We acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging, and pay our respects to the cultural authority of First Peoples.

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Above: beau stock – stock.adobe.com

CEO'S REPORT



Throughout 2025/2026, we focused on turning purpose into action in three key areas: supporting clinicians and services; listening and responding to our Members; and strengthening our ways of working and organisational capacity to deliver into the future.

Dear Members and Stakeholders,

Looking back over the past year, I am proud of the progress CRANAplus has made in supporting the rural and remote health workforce, strengthening our organisation and positioning ourselves for the future. As we continue to respond to the evolving needs of the sector, our commitment to supporting those working in remote and isolated health remains unwavering.

Throughout 2025/2026, we focused on turning purpose into action in three key areas: supporting clinicians and services; listening and responding to our Members; and strengthening our ways of working and organisational capacity to deliver into the future.

The launch of the CRANAplus Strategic Plan 2026–2031 at our Annual Conference marked an important milestone and provides a clear roadmap for the next five years. For the team, it is more than a strategy document: it guides where we put our effort, how we make decisions, and how we connect our programs, services and advocacy to the needs of the sector.

During the year, we also continued to embed the organisational structure changes introduced in early 2025, ensuring CRANAplus has the leadership, capability and alignment required to deliver our strategic priorities. The Chief Remote Area Nurse role has added an important national clinical voice to our work, while the commencement of the First Peoples Advisory Committee, chaired by CRANAplus' First Peoples Advisor, represents a significant step in ensuring First Peoples' voices, knowledge and leadership continue to shape the organisation and influence the way we work.

CRANAplus continues to provide holistic support to the rural and remote health workforce through a distinctive, sector-leading model that draws on cross-disciplinary expertise, complementary services and diverse perspectives. By bringing together education, mental health and wellbeing services, professional leadership, First Peoples perspectives, Member engagement and sector advocacy in one connected approach, CRANAplus provides a breadth of support that is unique within the sector and responds to the diverse needs of health professionals throughout their careers and across the communities they serve.

During the year, CRANAplus remained focused on balancing financial stewardship with strategic investment in organisational capability. This included strengthening systems, processes and operational capacity to better support our Members, stakeholders and programs into the future. While the financial result reflects a year of investment and transition, the organisation continues to maintain a solid financial position and is committed to ensuring long-term sustainability through disciplined financial management and careful use of resources.

The Digital Uplift Project has been an important investment in strengthening CRANAplus' digital foundations, with the aim of modernising the core systems that support our services, member engagement, education delivery and organisational reporting. Following extensive planning and implementation, the final go-live occurred in December 2025. Since then, our focus has been on bedding down the new systems, refining functionality and continuing to improve the experience for Members, stakeholders and staff. As expected with a major digital transition, this has involved ongoing adjustment, feedback and close collaboration with our teams and delivery partners. We remain focused on improving system performance, strengthening user experience and achieving the intended long-term benefits of this investment as the systems continue to mature.

I would like to thank the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing for its continued funding support, which enables CRANAplus to provide services valued across rural, remote and isolated health. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our Members. Your engagement, feedback and commitment to improving health outcomes in remote communities continues to shape our work and strengthen our advocacy. Whether you are a long-standing Member or have recently joined CRANAplus, your contribution to our community is deeply valued.

I also extend my sincere thanks to Chair Dr Ann Aitken PhD, Deputy Chair Danielle Causer, and the CRANAplus Board for their leadership, guidance and commitment throughout the year. Their generosity in volunteering their time, expertise and experience helps ensure CRANAplus remains focused on delivering meaningful outcomes for the workforce and communities we serve. I am grateful for their stewardship and the trust they continue to place in me as CEO.

I also acknowledge our volunteers, whose clinical expertise, generosity and lived experience of remote practice are integral to the reach and quality of CRANAplus education and workforce support. Their willingness to share their knowledge and give back to the profession is deeply appreciated.

Most importantly, I thank the CRANAplus team. Our staff bring skill, care and determination to work that often reaches across vast distances and complex practice environments. I continue to be inspired by their professionalism, adaptability and commitment to supporting the rural and remote health workforce. Their work, often behind the scenes, makes a tangible difference to the individuals, services and communities we support every day.

As we move into the coming year, my focus will be on implementation: bringing our Strategic Plan to life, strengthening our financial position, supporting our people, deepening Member engagement and continuing to advocate for a safe, capable and sustainable workforce.

The year ahead will bring both opportunities and challenges, but I am confident that CRANAplus is well positioned to meet them. Together with our Members, volunteers, partners, Board and staff, we will continue to strengthen the workforce, support remote communities and advance our shared vision for healthier rural and remote Australia.

Emma Barritt
Chief Executive Officer
CRANAplus



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CHAIR'S REPORT



Across Australia, health professionals continue to provide essential care in some of the country's most remote and challenging environments. On behalf of the Board, I acknowledge their dedication, professionalism and commitment to the communities they serve.

Dear Members and Stakeholders,

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present the CRANAplus Chair's Report for 2025/2026. As I reflect on the past year, I am encouraged by the progress made across the organisation and the continued commitment shown by our staff, volunteers, Members and partners. While the year has presented its share of challenges, it has also been a period of strategic renewal, organisational growth, and important preparation for the future.

Across Australia, health professionals continue to provide essential care in some of the country's most remote and challenging environments. On behalf of the Board, I acknowledge their dedication, professionalism and commitment to the communities they serve. Supporting this workforce remains at the heart of CRANAplus' purpose and guides the decisions we make as a Board.

The launch of the CRANAplus Strategic Plan 2026–2031 at our Annual Conference marked an important milestone for both the Board and the organisation. Developed through consultation and informed by the needs of our Members, stakeholders and the broader sector, the Strategic Plan provides a clear direction for the years ahead.

Built around six strategic pillars, it reflects our commitment to leading quality and innovation in service delivery; embedding Cultural Capability, Cultural Safety and Cultural Responsiveness; fostering growth and financial sustainability; driving operational excellence; strengthening membership value, retention, growth and engagement; and advancing sector engagement, advocacy and workforce support.

Throughout the year, the Board maintained close oversight of organisational transition, system improvement, and financial reporting. Our focus has been on strengthening the settings that support sound decision-making, clear accountability, and organisational resilience.

While much of this work occurs behind the scenes, it plays an important role in ensuring CRANAplus remains accountable, sustainable and well positioned to meet its responsibilities to Members, funders, partners and the wider sector, both now and into the future.

Financial sustainability remained a key focus for the Board throughout the year. While lower-than-budget income affected the year-end result, careful management of expenditure and ongoing oversight helped maintain CRANAplus' overall financial stability.

The Board recognises the importance of building a financially resilient organisation that can continue supporting the workforce and delivering on its purpose over the long term. Strengthening revenue, maintaining financial discipline and ensuring sustainable growth will remain priorities in the year ahead.

I would like to acknowledge our Board members, who generously volunteer their time and bring significant expertise, commitment and deep sector knowledge to their governance role with CRANAplus.

I thank Danielle Causer for her ongoing support as Deputy Chair, and Naomi Zaro, Josh Stafford and Kate Welleman for their continued service as Directors during 2025/2026. I also welcome Katrina Seng, who was elected as an incoming Director at the 2025 Annual General Meeting, and thank her for her contribution. We are also pleased to welcome Peter Worthington-Eyre and Carol Lydford, who were appointed as casual Directors in June 2026.

Together, these individuals bring a diverse range of skills, perspectives and experience to the Board. Their willingness to contribute their time and expertise strengthens the organisation and is greatly appreciated.

I also thank outgoing Advisor to the Board, Joe Cristaldi, for his valuable service and contribution during his time with CRANAplus.

On behalf of the Board, I warmly welcome Emma Barritt, who was formally recruited as Chief Executive Officer in November 2025. Emma has brought energy, clarity and steady leadership to CRANAplus during a period of significant transition. The Board has appreciated her collaborative approach, strategic focus and commitment to strengthening the organisation while remaining closely connected to the needs of Members and the broader remote health workforce. We thank Emma for the leadership she has shown throughout the year and look forward to continuing to work with her as CRANAplus delivers on its strategic priorities.

The Board is grateful to the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing for its continued funding support and partnership, which enables CRANAplus to provide meaningful services and support to the rural and remote health workforce.

We also acknowledge the many organisations, services and sector partners who work alongside CRANAplus in pursuit of shared goals. Their collaboration, expertise and commitment strengthen the impact of our work across Australia.

I would also like to acknowledge the professionalism and commitment of CRANAplus staff and volunteers throughout the year. Their efforts bring the organisation's purpose to life and make a tangible difference to the workforce and communities we serve.

To our Members, thank you for your ongoing support, continued trust and engagement in CRANAplus. Your feedback, participation and connection to the organisation help inform our decisions and ensure we remain focused on what matters most to the workforce we represent.

As we look ahead, the Board's focus will remain on governing the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2026–2031, maintaining financial discipline, supporting organisational sustainability and ensuring CRANAplus continues to build the systems, partnerships and influence needed to create long-term impact.

With a clear strategic direction, a committed Board and leadership team, and the support of our Members, partners and stakeholders, CRANAplus is well placed to continue strengthening its contribution to remote and isolated health and supporting better outcomes for communities across rural, remote and isolated Australia.

Dr Ann Aitken PhD
Chair
CRANAplus Board of Directors



Photo: John White Photos – stock.adobe.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Current



Dr Ann Aitken PhD
Board Chair



Danielle Causer
Deputy Chair



Naomi Zaro
Director



Josh Stafford
Director



Kate Welleman
Director



Katrina Seng
Director
(from November 2025)



Peter Worthington-Eyre
Casual Director
(from June 2026)



Carol Lydford
Casual Director
(from June 2026)

Outgoing



Joe Cristaldi
Advisor to the Board
(until June 2026)

Photo: Anna Zaro – stock.adobe.com

CRANAplus Strategic Plan 2026–2031

CRANAplus' strategic plan sets a clear direction to strengthen remote and isolated health through Operational Excellence, Cultural Capability, Workforce Sustainability and Innovative Service Delivery.

CRANA plus
improving remote health
crana.org.au

Our Vision

To be the leading experts supporting the remote and isolated health workforce.

Our Mission

To represent, support and educate the remote and isolated health workforce to promote the development and delivery of safe, high-quality healthcare.

Pillars

Strengthen

Strengthen Membership Value, Retention, Growth and Engagement

- Grow a thriving and connected community through increased value proposition and member retention
- Engage membership through continuous refinement and improved systems

Advance

Advance Sector Engagement, Advocacy and Workforce Support

- Elevate the voice and impact of the rural, remote and isolated health workforce
- Support a sustainable workforce through wellbeing, access to services and strengthened workforce pipelines

Embed

Embed Cultural Capability, Cultural Safety and Cultural Responsiveness

- Build Cultural Capability, Cultural Safety and Cultural Responsiveness across people, policies and practices
- Centre First Peoples' voices, support self-determination and deliver inclusive, effective services

Lead

Lead Quality and Innovation in Service Delivery

- Deliver high-quality, accessible education and workforce support through innovation and technology
- Use data, governance and partnerships to support professional development, wellbeing and practice

Foster

Foster Growth and Financial Sustainability

- Strengthen financial foundations through robust systems, governance and accountability
- Diversify revenue streams and partnerships to ensure long-term organisational sustainability

Drive

Drive Operational Excellence

- Align people, systems, governance and culture to strengthen efficiency, agility and resilience
- Embed smart ways of working and strong People & Culture capability to deliver consistent, high-quality outcomes

Our Values

Integrity • Social Justice • Excellence • Respect • Inclusiveness • Accountability • Safety

CHIEF RAN'S REPORT













Heather Keighley
Chief Remote
Area Nurse
CRANAplus

This year, the introduction of the CRANAplus Chief Remote Area Nurse (RAN) has been an important step in strengthening the visibility of rural and remote nursing and midwifery. Whether it was through the CRANAplus conference, conversations with colleagues and allies, or engagement with parliamentarians, employers and educators, I saw firsthand the strength, commitment and influence of rural and remote nurses and midwives. Across each of these experiences, one message has been consistently clear: rural and remote nurses and midwives must be recognised, supported and enabled to work at their full scope of practice.

The Chief RAN position has helped open conversations, strengthened relationships and brought greater attention to the realities and specialised nature of rural and remote practice. The work has been focused and purposeful. It has advanced transition and education pathways for a sustainable workforce, built advocacy, supported full scope of practice, and represented the workforce at professional meetings and conferences. This work directly supports one of our Strategic Plan priorities to advance sector engagement, advocacy and workforce support.

A highlight of the year was the CRANAplus 2026 Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference opening on International Nurses Day with the theme Distance. Dedication. Distance. Across the two days, keynote speakers including Professor Odette Best and Jill Klein encouraged us to reflect on the foundations of our professions, the courage needed to lead, and the importance of continued learning, particularly when the work is complex and circumstances are uncertain.

Those reflections have stayed with me throughout the year. Every day, rural and remote nurses and midwives lead through clinical decision-making, cultural responsiveness, community relationships, service coordination and advocacy. Their leadership is not always visible in titles, but it is visible in the care they provide, the trust they build and the decisions they make with people and communities at the centre of their care.

The value of nursing was also powerfully evident at the Parliamentary Friends of Nursing event in Canberra. It was encouraging to see nurse-led services demonstrate expanded scope and specialist practice in wound care, immunisation, ear care, primary health care, nurse practitioner practice, endorsed midwifery and remote health. The support shown by parliamentarians reinforced how important it is that rural and remote health voices are heard in national policy spaces.

Above, from left: Members of the Nursing Peaks, alongside Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Ageing; Hon Rebecca White MP, Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health and Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care; Dr Trish Cook MP; Adjunct Professor (Practice) Alison McMillan PSM, Commonwealth Chief Nurse; Shannas Lewis and Katherine Neil, CRANAplus at the Parliamentary Friends of Nursing event, Canberra; Heather Keighley, CRANAplus Chief RAN at Parliamentary Friends of Nursing event; Dr Trish Cook MP and CRANAplus, Parliamentary Friends of Nursing event. Heather Keighley with Nursing Policy and Advocacy Lead, Cherie Bennett, ASHM at the 2026 CRANAplus Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026. Photos: Australian College of Nursing.

I have also valued working alongside nursing and midwifery peak organisations. Shared advocacy has contributed to important gains, including the removal of collaborative arrangements for nurse practitioners and improvements to Medicare arrangements for nurses and midwives. These achievements remind us that change often comes through persistence, partnership and a shared commitment to better care. They also demonstrate the Strategic Plan in action by elevating the voice and impact of the rural, remote and isolated health workforce through strong sector partnerships.

A major CRANAplus achievement has been the expansion of our university collaborations. Formal agreements with La Trobe University Rural Health School and the University of Southern Queensland now provide clearer education pathways for rural and remote nurses and midwives by recognising CRANAplus course completions towards postgraduate qualifications. This work directly supports the CRANAplus Strategic Plan 2026–2031 by advancing high-quality, accessible education, using partnerships to support professional development, and strengthening workforce pipelines. It also helps ensure rural and remote nurses and midwives can build on their existing expertise through pathways designed for their context, rather than having to fit models developed for metropolitan practice.

At the heart of this work is a simple aspiration: that current and future rural and remote nurses and midwives feel supported to practise safely, confidently and in culturally safe ways that respond to community need. Supporting this workforce is one practical way we can contribute to better health outcomes in rural and remote communities. This reflects the Strategic Plan's broader commitment to workforce sustainability, access to support and the delivery of safe, high-quality health care.

Key priorities for the year ahead include:

- Strengthening support for short-term agency-employed and overseas-qualified nurses and midwives working in rural and remote settings;
- Building employer and education partnerships that support Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Pathways;
- Supporting the development of postgraduate education accreditation standards;
- Contributing to CRANAplus professional activities including the annual conference, stakeholder engagement, and member and workforce support;
- Representation at national and regional conferences and events; and the
- Provision of support for Primary Health Care research.

I feel proud of what has been achieved and deeply grateful to the colleagues, partners and Members who have shaped this first year. There is still important work ahead, but this year has affirmed what is possible when rural and remote nurses and midwives are visible, connected and supported. The Chief RAN role will continue to build on this momentum by elevating clinician voices, strengthening professional recognition and advocating for education pathways that prepare nurses and midwives for sustainable, confident and culturally safe practice. Most importantly, it will remain grounded in the people and communities at the heart of remote health.

FIRST PEOPLES ADVISOR'S REPORT





Dallas McKeown
First Peoples Advisor
CRANAplus

This year has been one of growth, connection and important milestones for First Peoples engagement at CRANAplus.

As First Peoples Advisor, I am proud of the progress we have made in strengthening how First Peoples voices, perspectives and cultural knowledge are embedded across our organisation and our work with the remote and isolated health workforce. First Peoples communities make up a significant proportion of the population in remote Australia, and ensuring health professionals have access to culturally informed knowledge and skills remains essential to achieving better health outcomes and building trust within communities.

One of our most significant achievements this year was the establishment of the CRANAplus First Peoples Advisory Committee. Bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses, midwives, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners and health leaders from across Australia, the Committee provides a strong and respected platform for First Peoples leadership within CRANAplus. Through shared experience, cultural knowledge and a commitment to workforce development, the Committee is helping to shape our future work in Cultural Safety, advocacy and workforce support. I am honoured to chair this group and look forward to seeing its influence continue to grow in the years ahead.

This commitment was also reflected in the 2026 CRANAplus Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference in Boorloo (Perth), which provided another opportunity to elevate First Peoples voices. A highlight was welcoming Aunt Lesley Radloff as CRANAplus' inaugural Elder in Residence. Her presence brought cultural guidance, connection and support to delegates throughout the event, creating a safe and meaningful space for learning and reflection. Feedback from attendees confirmed the meaningful value of this engagement, and it was inspiring to see the positive impact that cultural leadership can have on the conference experience.

Another conference highlight was the keynote presentation by Professor Odette Best, whose thought-provoking address challenged delegates to reflect on nursing history through a contemporary lens. Her presentation encouraged important conversations about truth-telling, cultural understanding and the role of First Peoples perspectives in health care education and practice.

Looking ahead, the launch of the CRANAplus Strategic Plan 2026–2031 provides a strong foundation for continuing this work. I am excited by the opportunities to further embed First Peoples priorities across the organisation and strengthen our partnerships with key organisations, including NAATSIHWP and CATSINaM. Together, we are helping build a stronger, more culturally safe and sustainable remote health workforce for the future.

Above, from left: Aunt Lesley Radloff, CRANAplus Elder in Residence; Dallas McKeown; Professor Odette Best; Left to right: Jason Coombes, First Peoples Advisory Committee Member, Aunt Lesley Radloff, Naomi Zaro, CRANAplus Board Member, Dallas McKeown, CRANAplus First Peoples Advisor. All photos taken at the 2026 CRANAplus Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026.



Photo: ronnybas – stock.adobe.com

EDUCATION SERVICES







During 2025/2026, CRANAplus Education Services continued to strengthen the capability of the rural and remote health workforce through the delivery of high-quality, nationally accessible education programs. Through a combination of face-to-face, hybrid and online learning opportunities, CRANAplus supported health professionals to maintain and enhance their clinical knowledge, skills and confidence, enabling them to deliver safe and effective care in rural and remote communities. During this period, CRANAplus remained focused on innovation, quality and accessibility, ensuring education offerings met the evolving needs of remote clinicians and contributed to improved workforce capability and better health outcomes in some of Australia's most geographically isolated communities.

Courses

This year, we successfully delivered 59 face-to-face courses across the country, with over 1,100 participants.

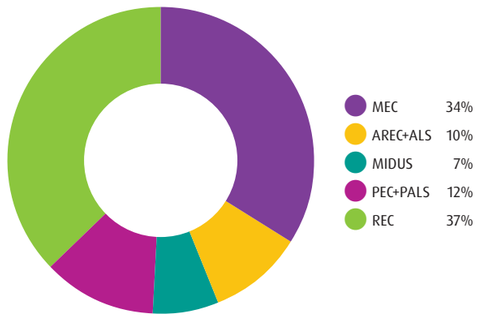
Overall number of courses by location



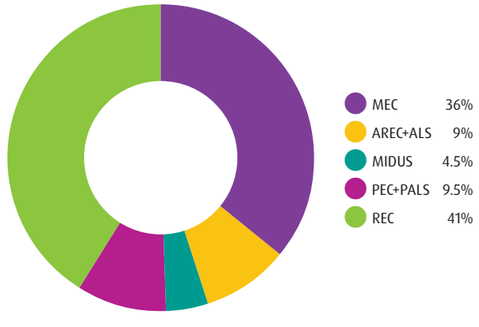
Overall number of participants by location



Percentage of courses by type



Percentage of participants by type



Key: MEC: Maternity Emergency Care. AREC+ALS: Advanced Remote Emergency Care & Advanced Life Support. MIDUS: Midwifery Upskilling. PEC+PALS: Paediatric Emergency Care & Paediatric Advanced Life Support. REC: Remote Emergency Care.

Over 96% of participants rate face-to-face courses as

Good – Very Good

(Scale is Very Poor, Poor, Okay, Good, Very Good)

What people think of our courses

"Unreal... so knowledgeable... I learnt so much."
Paediatric Emergency Care & Paediatric Advanced Life Support, 2026

"Highly relevant to remote practice."
Remote Emergency Care, 2026

"Lots of hands-on practice."
Practical Skills, 2026

Above, from left: CRANAplus facilitator in action on Remote Emergency Care course; CRANAplus facilitator ready to deliver Paediatric Emergency Care & Paediatric Advanced Life Support course; Facilitators and participants at CRANAplus Advanced Remote Emergency Care and Advanced Life Support course, Alice Springs. Overleaf, from left: Members of the CRANAplus Education team at the 2026 CRANAplus Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026; Practical Skills course participants practising ear and eye assessments, and foreign body removal; Some of CRANAplus valued facilitators and educators.

EDUCATION SERVICES



Practical Skills course relaunch

In February 2026, CRANAplus relaunched Practical Skills to build the hands-on clinical capability of health professionals working in rural and remote settings. Focused on the core procedures needed in isolated practice, the course provides structured, practical training led by experienced educators and facilitators.

The Practical Skills course covers a suite of foundational clinical procedures, including suturing, stapling, plastering and immobilisation techniques, eye and ear assessments, foreign body removal and more. These skills reflect common presentations in remote clinics where clinicians may be required to manage injuries, conduct assessments, and initiate early interventions without immediate access to specialist support. The course blends demonstration and guided practice to ensure participants gain confidence and competence in performing these procedures safely.

Since its launch, Practical Skills has been delivered successfully across multiple locations in Australia, with strong uptake from health professionals. Demand has extended beyond scheduled public courses, with several organisations requesting private delivery to support local workforce capability and service readiness. Participant feedback highlights the relevance of the skills taught, the quality of facilitation, and the immediate applicability of the training to remote practice.

Practical Skills course – 54 participants

Private courses

CRANAplus was proud to deliver the First Line Triage Care course to Danila Dilba Aboriginal Health Service in March 2026, supporting the capability development of Aboriginal Health Practitioners and emerging clinicians working in Darwin and surrounding communities. The course provided practical, remote context training in foundational assessment, early intervention skills and safe decision making, tailored to the needs of First Line staff who often serve as the first point of contact for community members seeking care. The opportunity highlights the value of accessible, context specific education that strengthens local workforce readiness and supports high quality care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Private courses are facilitated by experienced educators with deep knowledge of remote practice, ensuring participants receive high-quality, evidence-informed training aligned with national standards. Organisations choose private delivery for a range of reasons, including onboarding new staff, preparing teams for high-risk seasons, addressing identified capability gaps, or supporting staff who may be working in isolation. Participant feedback highlights the value of learning together, the relevance of the content to their day-to-day work, and the confidence gained through the course.

As demand continues to grow, CRANAplus remains committed to supporting health services through flexible, responsive and contextually relevant private course delivery. These offerings play a vital role in strengthening workforce capability, safety and retention across rural and remote Australia.

Danila Dilba® Health Service

Volunteer workforce

Volunteering with CRANAplus is central to the strength, reach and impact of our education programs. Our volunteer facilitators bring deep clinical expertise, lived experience in rural and remote practice, and a shared commitment to improving the safety and capability of the workforce. They play a vital role in delivering high quality, contextually relevant education that supports clinicians working in some of Australia's most isolated environments. Their contribution ensures that CRANAplus can continue to offer multidisciplinary, culturally safe and practical training at a national scale.

Throughout 2026, CRANAplus continued to strengthen its volunteer model through improved onboarding, clearer communication, recognition initiatives and expanded opportunities to contribute across multiple education streams. Volunteers support both public and private course delivery, contribute to course review, and provide valuable feedback that shapes our continuous quality improvement. Their dedication ensures that clinicians across Australia receive high quality training that builds confidence, capability and resilience.

Volunteering with CRANAplus is more than teaching, it is a meaningful contribution to workforce safety, community wellbeing and the sustainability of remote health services. We remain deeply grateful for the commitment, generosity and expertise of our volunteer facilitators, whose efforts underpin the success of our education program and the impact we achieve nationally.

Current pool of qualified volunteer course facilitators

91 active

during the reporting period



Photo: LisaGageler - stock.adobe.com

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING SERVICES





Supporting the wellbeing of rural and remote health professionals is central to the CRANAplus Strategic Plan commitment to building a culturally capable, resilient and sustainable workforce. Throughout 2026, the Mental Health & Wellbeing team delivered responsive, evidence-informed services tailored to the realities of living and working in rural, remote and isolated communities. Through the Bush Support Line, workplace wellbeing workshops, practical resources and digital initiatives, health professionals, students and their families could access trusted support wherever they were located.

Bush Support Line

The Bush Support Line (BSL) continued to provide trusted, confidential psychological support to the rural and remote health workforce across Australia, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

More health workers accessed the Bush Support Line during the year, with call volumes increasing by 24% compared with the previous year. This strong growth highlights the value of an accessible service delivered by psychologists who understand the realities of rural and remote practice, while reinforcing the BSL's vital role in supporting and sustaining the health workforce.

The service reached a diverse workforce, with 3% of callers identifying as First Peoples and 11% identifying as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD). This engagement affirms the importance of continuing to provide accessible and culturally responsive support for priority populations.

Feedback from callers powerfully reflects the difference a service designed for rural and remote health professionals can make:

"Such an amazing service. You guys understand remote work and you saved my life."

"No one else has any idea what it's like out here, but you all do. Having you there is huge and it's always beneficial."

Photo: Alexandre ROSA – stock.adobe.com

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING SERVICES





Wellbeing workshops

CRANAplus delivered 29 wellbeing workshops, reaching 515 health professionals across rural, remote and isolated locations. These workshops equipped participants with practical strategies to strengthen resilience, support psychological wellbeing and foster healthier workplace cultures.

Workshops were tailored to the circumstances of individual organisations and teams and delivered in flexible formats. Topics included self-care, stress management, responses to traumatic events, workplace relationships and the creation of psychologically safe workplaces.

Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with workshops achieving an average usefulness rating of 4.4 out of 5. This strong result reflects the ongoing relevance of practical, locally responsive wellbeing education for the rural and remote health workforce.

The workshops also created a valuable pathway to CRANAplus' broader mental health and wellbeing services, connecting participants with ongoing resources and support, including the Bush Support Line.

Mindful Mondays

Delivered weekly, Mindful Monday provided practical insights, wellbeing strategies and reflective content tailored to the experiences of rural and remote health professionals. The newsletter's reach continued to grow, with subscriber numbers increasing by 2.8% to 4,350. Engagement was also exceptionally strong, with an average open rate of 38.4%, significantly exceeding typical industry benchmarks and demonstrating the value of accessible wellbeing content that fits within busy professional lives.

Subscribers described the newsletter's practical and personal value:

> *"Another insightful, practical Mindful Monday edition. Thank you. I so look forward to these for myself and I share them with colleagues and my staff."*

Another subscriber reflected:

> *"This newsletter has kept me going and I keep looking forward to your Monday newsletters as the content speaks to me."*

Previous page: Senior Bush Support Line Psychologist, MC Mandile on the road delivering wellbeing packs to remote health centres, January 2026.
Above, from left: Wellbeing Lounge (with therapy dogs) at the 2026 CRANAplus Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026; Massages in the Wellbeing Lounge at the 2026 CRANAplus Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026.

Resources and digital engagement

CRANAplus strengthened its preventative and early-intervention approach by maintaining 35 accessible mental health and wellbeing resources. Available through tip sheets, podcasts, e-learning modules and digital information resources, this evidence-informed guidance supported flexible, accessible service delivery and enabled health professionals to access practical support whenever and wherever it was needed.

Resource development responded directly to emerging workforce challenges. New Burnout and Moral Injury tip sheets were developed, while the Healthy Workplace Relationships, Living and Working Remotely and Self-Care tip sheets were comprehensively reviewed and updated to ensure they remained current, practical and relevant.

Extending this support into workplaces, CRANAplus distributed 832 Wellbeing Packs and 861 additional wellbeing resources during the year.

Conference Wellbeing Lounge

At the 2026 CRANAplus Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference, the Mental Health & Wellbeing team again delivered the Wellbeing Lounge, providing a welcoming space where delegates could pause, connect and recharge.

The Wellbeing Lounge recorded more than 360 visits during the conference. Delegates participated in mindfulness activities, connected with colleagues, spent time with support dogs, accessed wellbeing resources and learned more about CRANAplus services.

A new interactive activity invited delegates to identify the 'single workplace change that would have the greatest positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing'. Their responses provided direct insight into three key workforce priorities:

- Adequate staffing, workload management and resourcing
- Stronger team connection and workplace culture
- Effective leadership and organisational support

These insights will guide data-informed wellbeing initiatives and strengthen CRANAplus' workforce advocacy by keeping the priorities identified by delegates at the centre of our work.



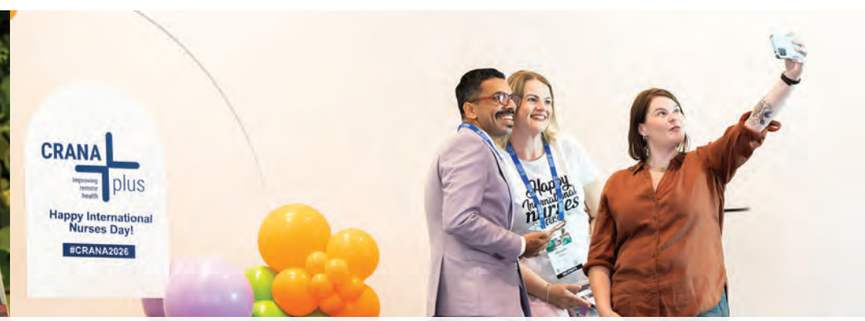
Looking ahead

Building on this year's achievements, CRANAplus will continue to strengthen accessible, innovative mental health and wellbeing support as workforce needs evolve. In the coming year, a new series of live webinars will provide practical guidance on issues including moral injury, psychological preparedness for remote work, recovery following traumatic events, mindful communication and vicarious post-traumatic growth.

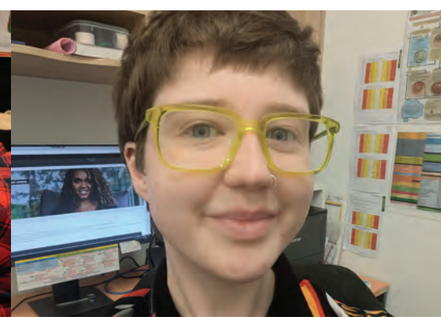
Together, the Bush Support Line, wellbeing workshops, practical resources, Mindful Mondays and conference engagement provided a strong and connected program of support. These achievements advance the CRANAplus Strategic Plan commitment to high-quality, accessible services and a resilient, sustainable rural and remote health workforce.

MEMBER SERVICES AND WORKFORCE SUPPORT









2025/2026 was a year of growth, connection and opportunity for Member Services and Workforce Support. We are proud of the many ways this division strengthened the rural and remote health workforce by providing professional development opportunities, scholarships, student engagement, advocacy, membership and leadership opportunities and sector-wide events.

At the heart of our work is a commitment to supporting those pursuing careers in rural and remote health throughout their professional journey, from students exploring the field to experienced clinicians seeking leadership, networking and professional development opportunities. This year, we continued to invest in initiatives that connected people, built capability and celebrated the extraordinary contribution of rural and remote health professionals across Australia.

Amplifying Member voices

This year, the CRANAplus Member Nursing and Midwifery Roundtable continued to grow as a trusted and influential forum for Member engagement. Now in its fourth year, the Roundtable brings together nurses and midwives, including First Peoples nurses and midwives, from across the country to share insights and highlight emerging issues affecting the rural and remote workforce.

Through the forum, Members shared valuable perspectives that have shaped CRANAplus priorities, advocacy and strategic direction, particularly in workforce sustainability, safety and clinical practice. Members also contributed to the review of CRANAplus position statements. Recognising the value of this input, the Roundtable moved to meeting every two months, creating more opportunities for Members to raise emerging issues and help shape CRANAplus' future work.

Expanding professional development

The CRANAplus webinar series was reignited in 2025/2026, renewing an accessible source of professional development for people working, or aspiring to work, in rural and remote health. The free, on-demand format allows participants to access learning when it suits them, an important consideration for health professionals working across different locations, schedules and practice environments.

CRANAplus Workforce Support Coordinators launched the 2026 series with *CPD that Works for You*, followed by a second webinar *My Journey to Nurse Practitioner*, featuring Nurse Practitioner and Endorsed Midwife Nicole Kuchel, who shared her professional journey, the challenges she encountered and practical advice for clinicians considering a similar career pathway. The refreshed series will provide context-specific and clinically relevant topics presented by clinicians and subject matter experts.

Student engagement – supporting future workforce pathways

Developing and inspiring the future rural and remote health workforce has remained an important focus. CRANAplus continued to engage undergraduate health students through clinical placement scholarships, mentoring, and opportunities to participate in our annual conference through student delegate scholarships.

We were particularly pleased to strengthen our relationship with the National Rural Health Student Network, creating new opportunities for collaboration and engagement. Plans include a joint webinar and participation in the Network's annual conference, while additional student-focused resources are being developed. Together, these initiatives help students build early connections with the sector and see rural and remote practice as an exciting and rewarding career pathway.

Supporting remote health professionals at every stage of their journey

For many health professionals, taking the first step into remote practice can feel daunting. Through Member resources, professional networks, shared stories and peer connections, CRANAplus helps clinicians feel informed, supported and inspired to pursue rewarding careers in remote health. Elliot Downes' experience highlights how access to the CRANAplus community can provide confidence and reassurance when making the transition to remote practice.

Member spotlight

"I joined when I was looking into this graduate program. I wanted to connect with other remote health professionals, and actually reading some of the stories in the magazine confirmed to me that I was making the right choice.

"It was a bit of a leap of faith, but it was amazing to read about the other experiences that people have had before me. So that gave me a bit more motivation to take it up and go out there."

Elliot Downes, graduate nurse and CRANAplus Member (pictured above)

www.crana.org.au/story/2026/taking-the-leap-to-remote

MEMBER SERVICES AND WORKFORCE SUPPORT









Investing through scholarships and grants

Scholarships and grants continued to play a vital role in developing the workforce pipeline, building workforce capability and creating professional development opportunities. We are grateful to our partners and donors, whose ongoing support allows CRANAplus to invest in health professionals at different stages of their careers.

The Gayle Woodford Memorial Scholarship, jointly sponsored by Flinders University, was awarded to Lacey Boudar, enabling her to complete the Graduate Certificate in Remote Health Practice. CRANAplus also facilitated the Undergraduate Remote Placement Scholarships, the Nurses Memorial Foundation of South Australia Grant, the CWA Nursing and Midwifery Professional Development Grant and the Facts of Life Lactation Consultant Preparation Scholarship. Together, these programs have helped reduce barriers to education and career development for nurses, midwives, and other health professionals working across rural and remote Australia.

We were also pleased to continue the CARPA Remote Health Management Scholarship, supporting leadership, management and workplace health and safety capability in the remote health workforce.

Excitingly, CRANAplus launched the new CARPA Remote Health Professionals Upskilling Scholarship, creating additional opportunities for health professionals working in MMM 6–7 locations to access essential clinical education and professional development.

Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference – bringing the sector together

One of the year's most significant achievements was the successful delivery of the 42nd CRANAplus Annual Conference in Perth. More than 250 delegates came together for keynote presentations, oral presentations, hotspot sessions and practical clinical workshops, with contributions from grassroots health professionals through to sector leaders.

Presentations from Professor Odette Best, Professor Jill Klein, Adjunct Professor Alison McMillan and newly appointed CRANAplus Fellow Adjunct Associate Professor Alison Weatherstone prompted important conversations about Cultural Safety, leadership, workforce sustainability and the future of healthcare delivery in remote communities. The popular Conference Expo and Escape Room Challenge added interactive opportunities for delegates to develop skills, explore remote health careers and test their teamwork and clinical problem-solving.

Previous spread, from left: CRANAplus Magazine, March 2026 edition; International Nurses Day (12 May 2026) at the CRANAplus 2026 Remote Nursing & Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth; Conference Scholarship attendees at the CRANAplus 2026 Remote Nursing & Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026; Elliot Downes, just a few weeks into their Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) Graduate Nurse Program in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. Above, from left: CRANAplus team at the CRANAplus 2026 Remote Nursing & Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026; Katherine Neil, CRANAplus with Professor Jenny May, National Rural Health Commissioner at the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Maternal Health, hosted by Maternal Health Matters, March 2026; Selina, 2026 Conference Attendee Scholarship recipient at the CRANAplus 2026 Remote Nursing & Midwifery Conference in Boorloo/Perth, WA, May 2026. CRANAplus' inaugural Honorary Fellows Adj. Prof. Shelley Nowlan and Adj. Assoc. Prof. Alison Weatherstone alongside Dr Ann Aitken PhD, Board Chair, CRANAplus (left) and Emma Barritt, CEO, CRANAplus (right).

Another highlight was the introduction of the Remote Nursing and Midwifery Conference Attendance Scholarship. The scholarship enabled undergraduate students, clinicians new to remote practice, and First Peoples clinicians working in rural and remote communities to attend the conference.

By reducing financial barriers, the initiative brought a wider range of voices and experiences into the event and increased access to professional development, networking, and mentorship. Following its successful introduction (see the spotlight below), the scholarship will return in 2027.

Planning is also underway for the 43rd Annual Conference, to be held at the Darwin Convention Centre in May 2027.

Scholarship recipient spotlight

"I'm appreciative and grateful to have received a CRANAplus Conference Scholarship. I wasn't entirely sure what to expect going in, being new to rural and remote healthcare, but I came away with a lot of food for thought. The following are just a few I've considered. The conference started on International Nurses Day, notably fitting. How Cultural Safety was permeated through the talks, as a lens rather than a checkbox, was significant. I am only at the beginning of transitioning from metro to rural practice, of what I heard will shape how I move forward, whether I realise it or not. I'm glad I was given the opportunity to attend to help further guide my direction. I appreciated learning about the challenges faced by rural and remote healthcare, as well as the many advantages."

Selena, Conference Attendance Scholarship Recipient (pictured above)

Celebrating excellence

A highlight of every year is the opportunity to recognise and celebrate excellence within the rural and remote health sector. The CRANAplus Awards honoured individuals and teams whose commitment, innovation and leadership continue to strengthen healthcare delivery in remote communities. These awards not only acknowledge individual achievement but also showcase the remarkable talent, resilience and dedication that exists across the sector.

This year also saw the recognition of several outstanding leaders through the CRANAplus Fellowship program. We were delighted to welcome Adjunct Professor Danielle Causer, Naomi Zaro, Fiona Hildebrand, Fiona Cameron and Glenda Gleeson as CRANAplus Fellows. The introduction of Honorary Fellow category provided another opportunity for recognition, Shelley Nowlan and Alison Weatherstone, named as its inaugural recipients.

As we reflect on the year, we are incredibly proud of what has been achieved. The success of our Member and stakeholder engagement activities, scholarship programs, professional development initiatives and annual conference demonstrate the important role CRANAplus continues to play in strengthening and connecting the remote and isolated health workforce. The appointment of our new Chief Remote Area Nurse has added further momentum to this work, bringing leadership, advocacy and visibility to our work. As we look to 2026/2027, we are excited to build on this strong foundation and continue creating opportunities that help the rural and remote health workforce connect, grow and thrive.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2025/2026

A year of investment and capability building

The 2025/2026 financial year was one of continued investment in CRANAplus' future, with a strong focus on strengthening the organisation's capability, systems and infrastructure to support the evolving needs of the remote and isolated health workforce.

Throughout the year, CRANAplus continued its mission to educate, support and advocate for remote health professionals, while navigating ongoing workforce pressures, increasing service delivery costs and growing expectations for digital engagement and support.

Total revenue and income for the year was $7.5 million, reflecting the continued scale and reach of CRANAplus' activities across Australia. Commonwealth Government funding remained the organisation's primary revenue source, with grant income secured through to 30 June 2028 providing an important foundation for future planning and stability. Membership revenue remained consistent with the previous year, demonstrating the ongoing value Members place on CRANAplus services and support.

A significant focus during FY2026 was investment in organisational capability. This included the continued implementation and optimisation of CRANAplus' technology platforms, digital systems and operational processes, designed to improve functionality, strengthen reporting, enhance user experiences and build organisational resilience. CRANAplus also continued to invest in specialist expertise and program delivery to ensure the organisation remains responsive to the changing needs of the remote health sector.

As a result of these strategic investments, together with broader cost pressures experienced across the not-for-profit sector, CRANAplus recorded an operating deficit of $274,031 for the year. While this represents a change from the surplus reported in FY2025, the result should be viewed in the context of a deliberate period of investment and organisational development aimed at strengthening the foundations required for future sustainability, growth and service delivery.

Importantly, CRANAplus continues to maintain a strong financial position. Net assets increased to $4.38 million, supported by a strong balance sheet and the continued value of the organisation's property assets.

The FY2026 financial statements were prepared by Lucent Advisory and independently audited by Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd. We are pleased to report that the audit was completed with no qualifications.

Moving into the next financial year, the Board and Executive remain focused on balancing strong financial management with strategic investment in the organisation's future. Priority areas include strengthening revenue diversification, improving operational efficiency and ensuring that the investments made in recent years continue to deliver tangible benefits for Members, stakeholders and the communities served by CRANAplus. With secure funding arrangements through to 2028, a strong asset base and a clear strategic direction, CRANAplus remains well positioned to continue supporting the remote health workforce and advancing its mission across Australia.

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2026

	2026 $	2025 $
Revenue and Income		
Revenue	7,513,709	7,522,624
Donations	532	80,379
Other income	10,972	-
Gain on disposal of assets	-	92,353
Total revenue	**7,525,213**	**7,695,356**
Expenditure		
Consultants and subcontractor fees	(978,523)	(542,449)
Amortisation of intangible assets	(14,790)	-
Depreciation	(93,362)	(118,096)
Employee costs	(3,305,564)	(3,712,849)
Expected credit loss (gain)/loss	-	10,080
Conference costs	(331,905)	(6,762)
Course costs, catering and facilitators	(254,086)	(304,952)
Donations and Scholarships	(29,329)	(30,141)
IT costs	(1,338,215)	(711,112)
Postage, printing and stationery	(260,878)	(350,287)
Travel and accommodation	(567,821)	(639,967)
Legal Fees	(16,631)	(101,430)
Insurance costs	(64,961)	(61,568)
Advertising	(32,567)	(56,815)
Professional fees	(38,993)	(128,118)
Other expenses	(471,601)	(563,649)
Total operating expenses	(7,799,226)	(7,318,115)
Operating (deficit)/surplus	**(274,013)**	**377,241**
Finance income	17,686	25,194
Finance costs	(8,394)	(13,013)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	**(264,721)**	**389,422**
Other Comprehensive Income *Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss*		
Gain on revaluation of land and buildings	272,750	591,670
Total comprehensive income for the year	**8,029**	**981,092**

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