

Statement on the need for better support for rural and remote osteopaths

This document is designed to serve as a statement on the osteopathy workforce in rural and remote areas. There is a current need for more equity in support and better access to government-funded initiatives as levers to encourage workforce supply in rural, regional and remote areas.

What is Osteopathy Australia advocating for?

We are advocating for more government funding to help enable better access to osteopathy services and to support more rural and remote health practitioners. Government funding for scholarships, incentives to work in rural and remote areas and more university course offerings will help to alleviate workforce shortages in areas other than metropolitan Victoria.

What do we want to achieve?

To ensure that Australian's living in rural, regional and remote areas have consistent access to osteopathy services to improve their overall health and wellbeing and receive the care they need. According to a study about rural and remote practice, exposing students to rural and remote practice can influence their decision to practice remotely.¹

Why this benefits Australians

- Encourages and supports rural based students to complete studies, regardless of financial status or geography.
- Increases the supply of allied healthcare professionals in rural and remote Australia.
- Works to reduce the impact of current workforce shortages acknowledged across rural and remote Australia.
- Improve access and equity for Australians to healthcare.

Policy issues and barriers

- Limited availability of supports, subsidies or incentives for allied health practitioners to work in rural, regional or remote areas.
- Lack of rural universities offer osteopathy or allied health courses. The provision of university courses in these regions may help to increase the workforce availability in these areas.

¹ PubMed. Perceptions toward rural and remote practice: a study of final year occupational therapy students studying in regional university in Australia. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20868418/>

- Poor governmental recognition of the role osteopaths and other allied health practitioners could play within the rural, regional and remote healthcare workforce.

The current workforce

The current osteopathic workforce is concentrated around metropolitan cities, especially in Melbourne, Victoria where 65% of the Osteopathy Australia membership works and resides.² The concentration of the membership exacerbates access to services that are needed and may inhibit crucial care being received in rural and remote areas.

The provision of financial incentives or supports will help to encourage osteopaths to move beyond metropolitan areas, as many are unable to do so without support.

Review

This position statement will be reviewed as often as required to align with legislative, regulatory, policy and/or practice change. Last review: January 2026.

Need more information or help?

For further information, a suggestion or to discuss this topic, please:

- Email your enquiry to info@osteopathy.org.au
- Call Osteopathy Australia on 1800 467 836
- Access further information via www.osteopathy.org.au
- Listen to our podcast: <https://omny.fm/shows/osteotalk/regional-pathways-osteopathy-beyond-urban-life>

² Osteopathy Australia Membership Survey Report. 2022