

## **Upskilling, Downsizing - the Lived Experience: Professional and Personal Reflections of an Alcohol and Other Drug Nurse Career Change**

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**Introduction:** Australia has a vast land mass. Despite its size, it is geographically, demographically and politically concentrated in the relatively small 6 State capital cities and the Eastern seaboard.<sup>(1)</sup> The number of AOD workers is disproportionately small in the Remote areas. There is a need for Remote AOD workers.<sup>(2)</sup>

**Purpose/outline of the presentation:** To present the potential and possibilities of AOD work in Remote and regional areas.

### **Conclusion or results that are significant:**

Almost one third of the population lives outside the Capital Cities.<sup>(3)</sup>

The drug and alcohol problems in Australia do not appear to follow the same dispersion, distribution and epidemiology of the general population spread.<sup>(4)</sup> There are many areas where alcohol flows more freely than water, and the supply of illicit drugs is more reliable or regular than food staples and groceries. The number of AOD workers is disproportionately small in the Remote areas.<sup>(5)</sup>

Remote regions utilise the skills learnt in Capital Cities and present professional opportunities and challenges which can be unique to the particular location. They also offer personal challenges and opportunities to nurses willing to step beyond their comfort zone.

**Audience this presentation is relevant to:** All AOD Doctors, Nurses and other workers

**How the topic relates to the conference:** Improving the workforce capacity in areas of greater need

**Summary of the major conclusions researched:** This is a professional and personal lived experience reflection of an AOD nurse who risked leaving the security of the known Metropolitan system, to journey onto the Road Less Travelled of the Remote.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few . . .

### **References:**

- (1) <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>
- (2) A. Searby, D. Burr and I. Mcgrath The demographic profile of alcohol and other drug (AOD) nurses in Australia: Experienced, highly qualified ... and endangered? Collegion, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.colegn.2021.03.006>
- (3) ABS 24/04/2018 3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2016-17 Estimated Resident Population at 30 June 2017.
- (4) National household Drug Survey 2016
- (5) A. Searby, D. Burr and I. Mcgrath The demographic profile of alcohol and other drug (AOD) nurses in Australia: Experienced, highly qualified ... and endangered? Collegion, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.colegn.2021.03.006>

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