



## Consumer Media Release

### Mobile GP Education Program expands healthcare impact in rural and remote Australia

- *12-month Heart of Australia GP education partnership announced with the aim of improving healthcare delivery in rural and remote parts of Australia.*
- *Rural healthcare professionals require a broader skill set to service communities with higher burdens of disease where populations are dispersed over vast distances.<sup>1</sup>*
- *Small rural towns in Australia have almost 60% fewer health professionals than major cities.<sup>1</sup>*

**SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, 18 February 2025** - Heart of Australia (HoA), an innovative mobile health service, has teamed up with leading biopharmaceutical company, Pfizer Australia, to expand its GP Education Program with the aim of improving healthcare delivery in rural and remote parts of Australia.

Small rural towns have almost 60% fewer health professionals than major cities. However, rural GPs are needed in greater numbers and require a broader skill set to serve communities with higher burdens of disease where populations are dispersed over vast distances.<sup>1</sup>

The HoA GP Education Program provides educational sessions for rural and remote healthcare professionals, including general practitioners (GPs), nurses and pharmacists, offering them the opportunity to learn from specialists and network face-to-face with industry colleagues.<sup>2</sup> These sessions focus on increasing knowledge and skills to help improve healthcare services and outcomes in local communities, particularly in rural and First Nations areas.

A broad range of topics are covered, including cardiology, endocrinology, respiratory and occupational health, with a focus on specific health concerns in rural and First Nations communities.

“Heart of Australia’s unique service enables us to work closely with local GPs. We are focused on collaborating with them to deliver a personalised and tailored service for their professional needs, as well as the health needs of their patients,” said Dr Rolf Gomes, Heart of Australia Founder and cardiologist.

“We’re supporting their patients with ongoing education as well as providing access to equipment many remote medical practices don’t have – it can be lifesaving for many patients.”

The physical ‘truck’ clinical model is also a drawcard, especially for residents who find traditional clinical settings daunting.

This includes patients like retired farmer, John Lang, who lives in Moura in central Queensland and had been travelling 250 kilometres to Gladstone, a six-hour drive from Brisbane, to see his cardiologist. “Blokes might not want to go to a hospital or a big grey building for medical attention, but they’ll happily get on a truck.

“Getting on the Heart Truck in Theodore saved my life. Dr Gomes could see I was unwell. He did an echocardiogram and found I had a leaky mitral valve. He sent me to Brisbane for a procedure. Now I make the 30-minute drive to Theodore every six months for a check up on the Heart Truck,” Mr Lang said.

#### Barriers to provision of high-quality primary care

The higher costs of delivering rural and remote health care can limit the availability of primary healthcare services.<sup>1</sup> In 2025, HoA will be able to expand its fleet to include five new Heart Trucks, enhancing its



ability to deliver vital specialist care services to rural communities, with a keen focus on lung cancer screening.

"Dr Gomes has a strong relationship with the GPs in the remote towns that Heart of Australia visits. These GPs are generally very isolated with limited access to healthcare professionals to engage with face-to-face. While virtual professional development is good, remote healthcare professionals are starved of valuable face-to-face interaction and training opportunities," said Dr Krishan Thiru, Pfizer Australia Medical Director and Sydney GP.

"Pfizer is committed to advancing health equity by improving healthcare access and outcomes across Australia. This partnership with Heart of Australia and its GP Education Program is an important step in addressing the healthcare disparities faced by rural and remote communities.

"By delivering education and healthcare resources directly to healthcare professionals in their local community setting, we are helping to build a sustainable and effective health workforce on the doorstep of Australia's rural communities," Dr Thiru said.

This partnership supports the Federal Government's commitment to strengthening the health workforce in rural and regional areas, enhancing the delivery of quality care to communities in need.<sup>3</sup>

### **Expanding access to underserved communities**

"Small rural towns often face significant health challenges, including a shortage of healthcare professionals and higher mortality rates compared to metropolitan areas," said Dr Gomes said.

The Heart of Australia-Pfizer partnership is part of a broader Heart of Australia initiative to address the health disparities faced by Australians living in rural, remote and First Nations communities. People in these areas face numerous barriers to accessing healthcare, including geographic isolation, low population density, limited infrastructure, and high healthcare delivery costs.

In fact, rural Australians experience a mortality rate up to 1.5 times higher than their metropolitan counterparts and are hospitalised at nearly twice the rate.<sup>4</sup>

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the life expectancy gap is even more pronounced, with women living 8.1 years less and men 8.8 years less than those in major cities.<sup>4</sup>

## **ENDS**

For media enquiries, please contact:

Roberta Sowden  
Palin Communications  
[roberta@palin.com.au](mailto:roberta@palin.com.au)  
0418 842 104

Maitreyi Kulkarni  
Palin Communications  
[maitreyi@palin.com.au](mailto:maitreyi@palin.com.au)  
0413 712 977

### **References**

1. National Rural Health Alliance, Rural Health in Australia Snapshot 2023. Accessed January 2025: <https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/rural-health-australia-snapshot>
2. Heart of Australia, Programs, GP Education. Accessed: January 2025 <https://heartofaustralia.com.au/gp-education/>
3. Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care, Statement of Intent from the National Rural Health Commissioner – 2 September 2024 to 30 June 2026. Accessed: January 2025 <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/statement-of-intent-from-the-national-rural-health-commissioner-2-september-2024-to-30-june-2026?language=en>
4. Breakthrough Nation. A 10-point plan for how the life sciences sector can drive Australia's health and wealth Accessed January 2025: [https://www.pfizer.com.au/files/FINAL-Pfizer\\_Thought-leadership-report-design-310724-1.pdf](https://www.pfizer.com.au/files/FINAL-Pfizer_Thought-leadership-report-design-310724-1.pdf)

**About Heart of Australia**

Heart of Australia is a private medical company that has been delivering high-quality specialist healthcare to rural, remote and First Nations communities across Australia for over a decade. Through its fleet of mobile clinics, Heart of Australia provides vital medical services such as cardiology and lung cancer screening to over 30 rural communities, helping bridge the healthcare gap between urban and rural Australia.

**About Pfizer: Breakthroughs That Change Patients' Lives™**

At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives. We strive to set the standard for quality, safety and value in the discovery, development, and manufacture of health care products, including innovative medicines and vaccines. Every day, Pfizer colleagues work across developed and emerging markets to advance wellness, prevention, treatments, and cures that challenge the most feared diseases of our time.

Consistent with our responsibility as one of the world's premier innovative biopharmaceutical companies, we collaborate with health care providers, governments, and local communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care around the world. For more than 175 years, we have worked to make a difference for all who rely on us. For more information, visit: <http://www.pfizer.com.au>