The RANZCO Vocational Training Program (VTP) is a five-year specialist program. RANZCO’s primary goal is to produce a specialist ophthalmologist who, on completion of training, is equipped to undertake safe, unsupervised, comprehensive, general ophthalmology practice, and meet the ophthalmic needs of the Australian and New Zealand population.

There are approximately 35 first year training positions in Australia and New Zealand. These are co-ordinated by training networks to provide continuous employment for the first four years in a variety of hospitals and other ophthalmic settings. The final year is more flexible for the trainee and is approved individually in advance. Placements to regional and rural locations are part of the program.

The Selection Committee of each training network is solely responsible for making employment decisions. RANZCO supports this process through circulating a final pool list for decision on ranking against local network requirements. Training networks maintain autonomy to emphasise or minimise the weightings that the Selection Panel has used to create the pool and conduct their own selection process including speaking with referees and local interview (if required).

NEW ZEALAND

The New Zealand training network is a nationwide network with 26 training posts. It has developed over the years to: provide exposure to all areas of ophthalmology to be a comprehensive ophthalmologist; support trainees in their preparation for exams; broaden their experience, introducing them to different styles of Ophthalmic practice in the New Zealand health system (larger city teaching hospitals vs smaller centres in provincial towns).

Posts are available in the five main centres of Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Hamilton, and Auckland. Four provincial centres also have training posts: Tauranga, Nelson, Hawkes Bay, and Palmerston North.

During the first four years of the VTP, trainees will be placed at several training centres throughout the country, not necessarily in the same island. This will expose them to a comprehensive ophthalmology experience in order to prepare them to be a consultant ophthalmologist in New Zealand.

All trainees are rotated to provincial centres for 6-12 months during the 4 years. Some provincial centres are suitable for 12-month rotations. The remainder 3 to 3.5 years will be at main centres. We try and place first year trainees at a main centre. We strive to offer trainees 12-18 months of continuous employment at main centres.

Trainees will be asked for their preferences of main centre and provincial locations. All effort is made to accommodate their wishes, but with the following caveats:

1. Trainees need to have full exposure to all subspecialties necessary for the VTP
2. Training posts cannot go vacant across the country.
3. New circumstances are considered as they arise (e.g. parental leave or new training posts becoming available), which will affect the matrix of placements
4. The number of moves between centres for individual trainees is kept to the minimum
5. An advance forecast of where each trainee will be placed over their 4 years will be provided
The training year starts in New Zealand on the second Monday of December. Some years, due to accommodating the above, a post may start later (e.g. June).

The fifth year of training is arranged by the trainee. New Zealand has more than 10 posts around the country which are suitable for this stage (and often filled by trainees from other Australian networks as well).

2020 Guide for Applicants to the New Zealand Training Network

NEW SOUTH WALES

The New South Wales (NSW) training network is composed of the Sydney Eye Hospital (SEH) and the Prince of Wales Hospital (POWH) network programs.

The SEH network program may include rotations at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital, Canberra Hospital, Concord Hospital, Gosford & Wyong Eye Surgery (private), Lismore Base Hospital, Liverpool Hospital, Northern Sydney (private), Port Macquarie Base Hospital, Royal North Shore Hospital, St George Clinic, St Vincent's Public & Private Hospitals, Sydney Eye Hospital, The Children's Hospital Westmead, The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, Western Sydney Paediatric (private), Westmead Hospital, Royal Darwin Hospital, Hobart Eye Surgeons (private), and Royal Hobart Hospital.

The POWH network program is based at Prince of Wales Hospital with rotations to Sydney Children's Hospital, Sutherland Hospital, Broken Hill Base Hospital and the Outback Eye Service (including Bourke, Lightning Ridge, and others). For POWH terms, the work location includes Sydney Eye Hospital for additional operating theatres. The program offers comprehensive ophthalmology training including all subspecialty clinics in a tertiary referral hospital setting as part of a wider education campus (University of New South Wales). The structure of the training program with a smaller team ensures rotation through all terms. Accredited training is available for four years plus an optional fifth year upon application. A separate employment application is required by NSW Health. For more information on employment application, please visit the NSW Health website.

QUEENSLAND

The Queensland (Qld) registrars rotate across a number of hospitals during their four years of basic and advanced training with two six-monthly rotations per year. Generally, the final year is done elsewhere. Trainees are required to plan for at least 12 months of their four years at a non-Brisbane hospital. All rotations offer exposure to a range of acute and chronic general adult ophthalmology. In particular, the regional hospitals (e.g. Townsville) offer further increased exposure to indigenous eye health. Paediatric ophthalmology and strabismus at Queensland Children's Hospital, Gold Coast University Hospital, and Townsville is also offered to trainees for at least six months during the four years of registrar training.

Trainees are encouraged to choose a mentor at the beginning of their training as a support separate to their clinical supervision and the Queensland network also has experience in supporting trainees through part time or job-sharing training which is considered and formulated on an individual case by case basis as required. A separate employment application is required by Queensland Health. For more information on employment application, please visit the Qld Health website.

2020 Guide for Applicants to the Queensland Training Network
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The South Australian network program may include rotations at Royal Adelaide Hospital, Flinders Medical Centre, Alice Springs Hospital, The Women's & Children's Hospital, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and Modbury Hospital. Each term is 6 months long and the program covers all subspecialties including paediatrics for all trainees. It has a highly regarded indigenous rotation in Alice Springs which involves weekly trips often by small plane to remote communities. Many of the hospitals in the SA training program have world renowned academic departments giving trainees the opportunity for research.

Registrars are provided with a high level of supervision in the early years of training with increasing independence in later years. It provides excellent didactic training, has a long history of consultant involvement in the RACE and consequently many of our trainees have excelled in the RACE.

Applicants will be required when completing your RANZCO online registration form to select the training networks to which you intend applying to. This action submits an expression of interest to the network. No other employment application is required for South Australia. For more information, please visit the SA Health website.

VICTORIA

The Victorian training program is based at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) and first year trainees are initially based here for one year. Trainees in years 2-4 are rotated through both internal (RVEEH) and external hospital positions in Melbourne and in rural settings in order to give them exposure to as many subspecialities as possible to allow trainees to become comprehensive ophthalmologists. The fifth and final year of training is organised by the trainee and after approval by RANZCO.

The standard of excellence in ophthalmic training in Australia and New Zealand is held in very high regard both nationally and internationally and graduates of the Victorian program are highly respected around the world.

Currently RVEEH accepts 7-8 new trainees each year. The Victorian training program is generally regarded as an excellent program by both basic and advanced trainees as trainees get exposure to the Eye Simulator heavily in their first year of training as well as a strong mentorship program and sense of collegiality. The RVEEH is a large training institution currently spread over two sites during renovations, however the exposure that trainees get to complex ophthalmic problems including being rotated through the emergency department is invaluable. There are regular audit and clinical meetings as well as teaching sessions for trainees at all levels of training, particularly to allow trainees to prepare for examinations, both at RVEEH and at external hospitals.

Another main advantage of the Victorian training network is that the RVEEH gives out an advance roster to trainees for their entire four years of training which has always been an attraction. This roster is designed to maximise an individual trainee’s exposure to all subspecialities needed to satisfy training requirements for the Vocational Training Program. Trainees are employed directly by RVEEH after satisfying the RANZCO criteria to make them eligible for selection and the number of training posts available is also influenced by factors such as trainees taking parental leave. With the new selection process in place, trainees no longer apply directly to the hospital for accredited posts and need to satisfy the RANZCO requirements to be considered for selection. Candidates will then be invited for an interview once the selection process has been completed.
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Western Australia (WA) network program may include rotations at Royal Perth Hospital, Fremantle Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth Children's Hospital, Bunbury Hospital and Southwest Eye Surgeons, and Lions Outback Vision.

Applicants will be required when completing your RANZCO online registration form to select the training networks to which you intend applying to. This action submits an expression of interest to the network. No further employment application will be required for the WA Training Network. For more information, please visit the WA Health website.

REGIONALLY-ENHANCED TRAINING NETWORK AUSTRALIA (RTN)

The Australian Regionally-Enhanced Training Network (RTN) is a new nationwide network which will have training posts in all States and Territories when fully rolled out. The network is currently in development with the aim for first intake of trainees in 2021. Applicants are invited to submit an expression of interest to train in the RTN and will have the opportunity to resubmit their training network preferences if the RTN is not established in time for the 2021 intake.

The major difference between this network and existing networks will be the increased proportion of time over the training period that the trainee spends in regional Australia. Approximately one third of the trainee’s time will be spent in urban centres and two-thirds in regional Australia.

The primary aim of the RTN is to train well-rounded ophthalmologists who have the skills and confidence to practice comprehensive ophthalmology post-fellowship in any area – urban, regional, rural and/or remote.

RTN trainees will achieve the same degree of excellence in training that the trainees from the current vocational training networks do. They will sit the same exams and meet the same RANZCO requirements to obtain their fellowship.

Regional posts have a lot to offer trainees and are currently included in all existing training networks. They provide broad comprehensive ophthalmology clinical experience with increased opportunities to follow each patient through the course of their presenting problem. This contrasts with the patient journey in big city teaching hospitals, where patients are typically funneled into subspecialty clinics following their initial presentation. In addition, regional terms typically offer trainees a wider range of surgical training.

Background:

Patients in remote, regional and rural areas should have access to the same high standard of health services as those in urban centres. In many fields of medicine, including ophthalmology, there is a workforce shortage in these areas resulting in reduced access by regional patients to these essential services.

The decision by RANZCO to develop the RTN shows leadership in addressing this issue.

An immediate positive effect of increasing the number of training registrars in regional areas will be to increase ophthalmic services in and funding to those areas in which these registrars are placed.
The long-term objective is to increase the numbers of RANZCO fellows practicing in non-urban areas. Research has found that doctors who have lived in non-urban areas prior to training and/or doctors who train in non-urban areas are more likely to practice in regional areas after completing their training. Doctors training in the RTN will make individual decisions about where to establish practices post training, just as doctors training in other networks do and will not be required to practice in regional areas.

The design of the RTN:

The RTN is designed to give trainees opportunities to develop a solid foundation of knowledge and clinical and surgical skills in their first year. Subsequent years will consolidate and extend trainees’ learning in line with the concept of spiral learning. This approach will provide optimal support for trainees in passing their clinical and surgical assessments and in passing their examinations.

Each trainee rotation has a longer duration than is typical in many urban-centric programs to avoid RTN trainees having to change locations frequently. Additionally, this will encourage supervisor investment in supporting trainees to achieve the learning outcomes and requirements of the VTP.

Applicants are invited to express an interest in the RTN. Those who are successful in reaching the RANZCO National Ophthalmic Matching Program (NOMP) will have the opportunity to rank their preferences for training in each of the networks which interviewed them, including the RTN. Please refer to the ‘Trainee Selection Policy’ on RANZCO’s website for further details around the selection process.

Each complete training pathway will provide a broad exposure to all the areas of ophthalmology needed to be a comprehensive ophthalmologist and will give trainees hands-on experience in the wide range of ophthalmic styles of practice in Australia; such as teaching hospitals in both large cities and provincial centres, private practice medicine, Aboriginal Medical Service clinics and remote community outreach clinics.

The RTN training pathway:

1. Foundation year: This year is focused on the establishment and consolidation of basic clinical skills, operative skills and knowledge. During this year you will have broad access to comprehensive ophthalmology and many sub-specialties including paediatric ophthalmology.

   You will be based in a public hospital setting in a small to medium city such as Canberra, Hobart or Geelong where there is interplay between ophthalmology and other specialties.

   You will be well-supported by the experience and guidance of multiple committed RANZCO fellows.

   In each of these centres, you will also be working alongside and learning with trainees from other training networks.

   You will have a clinical workload and an on-call roster that allows for the consolidation of clinical skills and for study.
2. Consolidation year: You will be based in a regional comprehensive ophthalmology practice. You will be well-supported by your supervising ophthalmologists who will be invested in your learning journey. You will extend your clinical skills and have access to learning a wide variety of surgical procedures during this year. You will have the opportunity to provide care to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients during this posting. Possibilities for this year include placement in practices in towns such as Tamworth, Bunbury or Orange.

3. Subspecialty year: This will be your first year as an advanced trainee. You will be based in a large city for this year with access to subspecialty ophthalmology clinical and surgical experience. During this year you will extend your knowledge and skills with the aim of sitting the RACE exam at the end of this year.

4. Maturation year: After succeeding in passing the RACE you will now be in a position to challenge yourself and extend your skills over the next year through to the completion of your advanced training. During this fourth year you will again be based regionally in a comprehensive practice environment which will include the care of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients. Possibilities for this year include Wagga Wagga, Darwin and Broome.

Fellowship year: This year is typically arranged by the trainee in Australia, New Zealand or in other places overseas. With the Commonwealth funding arrangements in place for the RTN (IRTP) it may be that this 5th year needs to be taken in regional Australia for some RTN pathways. Whether or not this is the case for any particular training pathway will be made clear before you are asked to rank your training choices.

Last updated: 3 December 2019