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Appointment for Deakin Rural Health

WARRNAMBOOL-BASED Dr Vin Versace has been appointed as the new Director of Deakin Rural Health.

To coincide with his new role, which started on July 2, Dr Versace has also been appointed as an Associate Professor in Deakin's School of Medicine.

Dr Versace said the appointment continued Deakin University's commitment to rural and regional health.

"An appointment based in Warrnambool is a perfect example of the school investing in that commitment," he said.

"It's exciting to me personally because it allows me to pursue a meaningful academic career in the part of the world where I enjoy living. It's also a good vote of confidence for the campus."

Deakin Rural Health is involved in health research and provides placements in the region for nursing, allied health and medical students.

Dr Versace said he hopes to expand local placement options.

"The rationale is that if people in these professions have a rewarding and engaging experience in a rural setting they're far more likely to return to work in a rural setting which will address workforce shortages," he said.

Deakin Rural Health, which is based at Deakin's Warrnambool Campus, will continue its research work in chronic disease, particularly diabetes prevention and improving Aboriginal health outcomes.

"Most of the research is based in the region but we try to find answers to rural health issues that could apply across Australia," Dr Versace said.

Dr Versace is a long-time resident of Western Victoria. He moved from Mount Gambier to Warrnambool in 2000 to complete his Bachelor of Science at Deakin and stayed on to do his honours in population genetics and then his PhD in water resources.

In late 2012 he joined the Greater Green Triangle University Department of Rural Health as a biostatistician. This marked his move into population and public health research across a breadth of projects. His research ranges from NHMRC-funded projects evaluating lifestyle interventions for diabetes prevention, through to smaller local projects focused on building research capacity.

Dean of the School of Medicine, Professor Jon Watson, said Dr Versace was well placed to take Deakin Rural Health forward.

"Vin has been acting Director of Deakin Rural Health since early 2017 and has performed that role with distinction," Professor Watson said.

"He has a strong vision for Deakin Rural Health, is passionate in his focus on maximising opportunities for rural allied health, medical and nursing student placements in Western Victoria, and also strong in his plans for collaboration across the University in growing rural health research."