

## **Studying in the Outback: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experience of Women in Regional, Rural and Remote Areas Studying Nursing Online**

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**Abstract :** Research was undertaken to explore the question “what is known about the experiences of regional, rural and remote Australian women undertaking a Bachelor of Nursing program delivered online?”. The findings will support future research aimed at improving the retention and completion rates of women studying nursing in regional, rural and remote areas. There is a critical shortage of nurses working in regional, rural and remote (RRR) Australia. It is well supported that this shortage of nurses is most likely to be addressed by nursing students who are completing their studies in RRR areas. Despite this, students from RRR Australia remain an equity group and experience poorer outcomes than their metropolitan counterparts. Completion rates for RRR students who enrol in tertiary education courses are much less than students from metropolitan areas. In addition to this, RRR students are less likely than students from metropolitan areas to gain a tertiary level qualification at all, and even less likely to gain a Bachelor level degree which is required for Registered Nurses. Supporting students to remain in regional, rural and remote areas while they study reduces the need for students to relocate to metropolitan areas and to continue living and working in RRR areas after graduation. This research holds implications for workforce shortages internationally.

**Keywords :** nurse education, online education, regional, rural, remote, workforce

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