



## Stronger Rural Health – Recruitment and retention – addressing doctor shortages across rural and remote areas by strengthening bonded programs

The Government will provide additional funding to create a modern, flexible system with greater capacity for the Bonded Medical Places Scheme and Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship Scheme to place vocationally recognised (VR) Australian trained doctors in areas of workforce shortage. The measure significantly improves bonding arrangements by moving from individual contract arrangements to a legislated regulatory model, and better supports bonded participants to fulfil their return of service obligations.

It provides a consistent three year bonding period for participants, streamlines the current contract-based model of administration, and allows participants in existing programs the option to opt in to these new arrangements, which also provide greater flexibility. It funds interactive web-based and other digital communication channels to engage with and inform bonded students and doctors to better understand and manage their bonded obligations.

### Why is this important?

Improved bonded programs will attract new medical students to work in locations of need, especially in rural and remote areas.

Under current arrangements, students get a medical place in return for a commitment to work in rural, regional and remote areas for up to six years after attaining Fellowship. This measure will introduce a three year bonding period. Current students with a 12 month return of service obligation will be able to opt in to these arrangements and benefit from the system reforms while retaining their 12 month return of service obligation.

### Who will benefit?

All Australians living and working in regional, rural and remote areas will benefit from increased access to VR Australian trained doctors.

More than 9,000 students and doctors currently participate in bonded programs. This will support Australian trained doctors, improve attraction and retention of participants in bonded programs, reduce administrative burden, and provide better support during their training.

### How much will this cost?

The Stronger Rural Health Strategy is a \$550 million investment to support improved rural health services.

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