



**Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie**  
**Deputy Leader of The Nationals**  
**Minister for Rural Health**  
**Minister for Sport**  
**Minister for Regional Communications**  
**Senator for Victoria**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Government Budget initiative to train and retain country doctors**

An Australian Government investment of more than \$95 million to set up the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network will transform rural medical school training, enabling students to undertake most of their education and training in the rural areas to provide a continuum for doctors to learn, train and work in the regions.

The Minister for Rural Health, Senator Bridget McKenzie, today visited Charles Sturt University in Bathurst which, in partnership with Western Sydney University, is one of the universities with longstanding roots in the Murray-Darling that will be involved in the network.

“Charles Sturt University, in partnership with Western Sydney University, will provide country kids the opportunity to become country doctors through a comprehensive education, training and clinical experience program,” Minister McKenzie said.

“It focuses on supporting teaching, recruitment and retention of medical practitioners in country areas, like Bathurst and Orange.

“Students will begin to study through the network in 2021. Once all the rural medical school programs are up and running, approximately 140 medical students will study each year.

“The Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network is part of a 2018-19 Budget investment of \$550 million in the Stronger Rural Health Strategy to improve access to health services for people living in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

“The Strategy also includes options for medical training after graduation. Junior doctors will be supported to gain clinical experience in the private sector and primary care settings with a strong emphasis on training in rural areas.

“It will provide significant benefits to Central West communities. In particular this will mean a larger university presence, new infrastructure, and professional support over

the longer term. Local hospitals and medical practices in the district will benefit from rural doctors who have come from the regions, trained in the regions and stay in the regions.

“Students living in Orange and neighbouring communities will be able to continue living in the area while studying and training as part of their medical degree at the Charles Sturt University campus.

“This means students can focus more on their education and training without the pressures and expenses associated with relocating to capital cities where medical schools are generally located.

“The new network also provides students the option of studying and training in more than 20 regional and rural communities.

“The universities involved in the network will have the opportunity to participate in a new way of delivering medical education to build up the health sector in regional and rural Australia.

“The new Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network is an innovative and bold initiative which will provide the next generation of rural doctors with the opportunity to study and practise in their local community.”

A number of programs to better manage medical graduate supply and support better workforce outcomes are linked to the strategy. These will be managed by the Department of Education and Training. More information is available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/HERI-Budget-Overview-18-19>.

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