



**Senator the Hon Fiona Nash
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR HEALTH**

MEDIA RELEASE

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What the budget means for rural and regional Australians

Assistant Minister for Health Fiona Nash said the Coalition Government had reaffirmed its commitment to rural and regional Australians.

“The Government is repairing the Budget so that we can build a stronger economy to generate more jobs and deliver better services in the years ahead,” Minister Nash said.

“One of the best things we can do for the bush is to fix the economic mess left by the previous Labor Government.

“With an ageing population, and the enormous future cost of emerging medical technologies, the Government needs to make changes today to our health system for tomorrow.

“The Australian Government has honoured its Budget election commitments and will invest in new infrastructure funding for medical practices to build the facilities they need to service the community and take on more trainees.”

Minister Nash said Budget commitments would assist more GPs to train Australia’s future workforce.

The Coalition Government is delivering on its commitment to invest \$238.4 million over five years to double the Practice Incentive Payment for teaching medical students. The amount will go from \$100 to \$200 per session.

The Government will also deliver on a commitment to provide new infrastructure funding. \$52.5 million will enable regional and rural GP practices to build the facilities they need to take on more trainees. A minimum of 175 infrastructure grants, each capped at \$300,000, will be made available.

We will also provide around 500 new and allied health scholarships. \$13.4 million will support the delivery of these scholarships over three years and will target workforce shortages in regional and rural areas.

The Government has already committed \$40 million over four years to support extra medical intern places in private hospitals and in regional and rural areas. Seventy-six interns began their one year placements in January 2014.

“The Australian Government is increasing overall health spending by more than \$10 billion (or 16%) from \$64.5 billion in 2013-14 to \$74.8 billion in 2017-18,” Minister Nash said.

“In our country with a population of 23 million people, the taxpayer currently funds 263 million free services a year under Medicare. Ten years ago the Commonwealth was spending \$8 billion on the MBS; today it is \$19 billion. In ten years' time, it is forecast to be more than \$34 billion. These figures are not sustainable. If we are to have a strong and sustainable health system into the future, we need to act now.

“Even if the Government wasn't facing this debt figure we have inherited of \$667 billion, no Government, State or Federal, can meet the enormous financial demands of health over the next 20 years, without significant structural change now.”

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