



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

Mr Ken O'Dowd MP
Federal Member for Flynn

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Stronger Rural Health Strategy to support more doctors in Flynn

Attracting more doctors to the Calliope and Gladstone region was front and centre in discussions led by the Member for Flynn Ken O'Dowd following the Minister for Rural Health, Senator Bridget McKenzie's visit to the region today.

Minister McKenzie assured local health professionals that the Coalition Government is responding to the challenge of ensuring Australia has the right mix of health professionals to deliver high quality healthcare in rural and regional areas, through the \$550 million Stronger Rural Health Strategy announced in the Federal Budget last week.

"Our comprehensive Stronger Rural Health Strategy will support 3,000 additional specialist GPs and 3,000 extra nurses and allied health professionals in rural general practices over the next decade, directly benefiting local communities in Queensland," Minister McKenzie said.

"An important element of the strategy is that it will also provide vital support to the teaching, recruitment and retention of doctors in country Australia.

"This is an historic 10 year plan which represents the most significant overhaul of Australia's health system in decades."

Federal Member for Flynn, Ken O'Dowd acknowledged the significance of this Strategy and highlighted how it will positively impact those living in towns like Calliope and Gladstone.

"It is vital that we help support the training and retention of doctors in regional centres such as in my electorate of Flynn—it shouldn't matter if you live in the city of Gladstone, the little town of Calliope or Springsure, you should have adequate access to a doctor."

“The Minister for Rural Health and I also visited the Boyne Island Tannum Sands Medical Centre earlier today, recipients of \$300,000 in funding through the Rural General Practice Grants Program, where we heard firsthand how important Commonwealth support is to ensuring practices like theirs remain open for local residents.

“This funding has allowed Boyne to expand and upgrade their medical practice, including construction, fit-out and refurbishment, to improve services and deliver for residents of Gladstone.

“The Stronger Rural Health Strategy will continue and expand on this support through quality data for workforce planning, better targeted incentives for rural bulk billing and more training and support for the nursing workforce in general practice.”

Through changes to the existing Skilled Migration Program in the 2018 Budget, Minister McKenzie said the Coalition Government will improve the targeting of visas for general practitioners to areas experiencing doctor shortages.

“Doctors will be directed away from over-serviced metropolitan and outer metropolitan areas to regions of workforce need, which are our communities in rural, regional and remote areas,” Minister McKenzie said.

“Projections show that by 2030 Australia may have as many as 7,000 additional doctors. We know there is inequitable distribution of doctors and rural and remote Australia is still experiencing doctor shortages.

“The Coalition Government’s Stronger Rural Health Strategy is a comprehensive package designed to address workforce distribution and will provide Australians with the right mix of qualified health professionals in the right place, at the right time to deliver high quality health care.”

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