



STRONGER RURAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Reformed bonded medical programs

Current bonded medical programs provide students a medical place in return for a commitment to practice in areas of workforce shortage for a specified period. Under the Stronger Rural Health Strategy, a more flexible system will be established to encourage and support more doctors to work and stay in rural and remote areas.

Key reforms include:

- simplified administration by moving from individual contract arrangements to a legislated program
- a new standard three year return of service obligation (RoSO)
- an interactive web-based portal and other digital communication channels to support bonded students and doctors to better understand and manage their bonded obligations.

Investment

An investment of \$20.2 million over four years from 2018–19 will support reforms to the existing Bonded Medical Places (BMP) Scheme and the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) Scheme.

Reforms will simplify the administrative arrangements associated with the BMP and MRBS Schemes, and provide a mobile friendly web portal to make it easier for participants to self-manage, plan and undertake RoSOs.

Return of Service Obligation

RoSOs relate to the period of work which is required to be undertaken by the bonded doctor to fulfill the program's requirements.

A standard three year RoSO will take effect through the new arrangements. Existing participants will have the option to opt-in to the new arrangements.

Current participants

Current participants of the BMP/MRBS Schemes will be able to choose to move to the reformed arrangements. Current contract conditions will continue to apply for participants who choose not to move across and those participants will not have access to the benefits of the reforms.

BMP Scheme participants who entered the BMP Scheme in the years 2016 to 2019 (inclusively) will be able to move across to the reformed BMPS Scheme and retain their 12 month RoSO.

Eligibility

Over 9,000 students and doctors who currently participate in the BMP and MRBS schemes, together with individuals who are planning to apply for a bonded medical place at a University, will be eligible to access the new arrangements.

Transition to new arrangements

New medical school students entering a bonded program will enter under the new arrangements from 1 January 2020. All existing bonded medical students and bonded doctors will be able to move across to the reformed arrangements from this date.

Further information

Updates on progress of the reform and further information:

- Department of Health's website www.health.gov.au
- Rural Workforce Agencies www.rhwa.org.au
- email the Department of Health's BMP inbox: BMPScheme@health.gov.au or MRBS inbox: MRBScholarships@health.gov.au
- Modified Monash Model of geographical classification and locations: www.doctorconnect.gov.au