



**THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH  
MINISTER FOR AGED CARE  
MINISTER FOR SPORT**

**SENATOR THE HON FIONA NASH  
MINISTER FOR RURAL HEALTH**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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#### **Building a Health Workforce for Rural Australia**

More doctors, nurses and allied health professionals will be trained and located in rural Australia under an overhaul of clinical training by the Turnbull Government.

The initiatives, announced in the Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO), is a further step in the Government's comprehensive push to bridge the city-country divide in health services delivery by addressing workforce shortages in regional, rural and remote areas.

"The Turnbull Government is committed to getting the right health professionals, whether doctors, nurses, dentists or allied health practitioners, with the right skills into the right areas, where they are most needed – particularly rural Australia," Minister for Health Sussan Ley said.

"People need to be trained in those areas where there are workforce shortages – and that is rural Australia.

"We know from experience that when students do their training in rural areas, they are much more likely to stay, practice and live in those areas.

"These new initiatives will help deliver this by building upon ongoing Budget initiatives to tackle health workforce shortages in rural and remote areas through more focused approaches to training, scholarships and rural incentives."

Spearheading the new rural health workforce initiatives is the creation of a new *Integrated Rural Training Pipeline* that will help to retain medical graduates in rural areas by better coordinating the different stages of training within regions. Through this approach more health practitioners will be able to complete the different stages of their medical training, from student to specialist, in rural areas. There are three components of this new measure:

#### **Regional Training Hubs**

To help build training capacity across the different levels of medical training, up to 30 new regional training hubs will be set up across rural Australia to work with local health services to help stream students through the pipeline. These hubs will enable students to continue rural training past university into postgraduate medical training. The hubs will be located at existing

rural training sites, with funding of over \$14 million per year allocated through a competitive process in 2016.

### **Rural Junior Doctor Training Innovation Fund**

More than \$10 million per year will be invested in a new Rural Junior Doctor Training Innovation Fund to foster the development of new ways of rural junior doctor training. This investment will be targeted at rural-based interns to enable them to spend some of their training year in rural general practice, building on the rural training networks for junior doctors that are funded by the states and territories.

### **Specialist Training Programme**

A targeted expansion to the highly successful Specialist Training Programme will provide up to 100 new training places in rural areas – 50 in 2017 and another 50 in 2018, at a cost of over \$16 million per year by 2018-19. This will enable the Specialist Training Programme to provide up to 1,000 ongoing places by 2018.

In total, Ms Ley said an investment of up to \$93.8 million will be made in the new Integrated Rural Training Pipeline from 2015-16 to 2018-19.

This investment will be made possible by rationalising funding for a number of poorly-targeted health workforce programmes and activities, including the Clinical Training Fund. This will generate savings of \$461.3 million from 2015-16 to 2018-19, with surplus funds being sensibly invested into budget repair.

Minister for Rural Health, Fiona Nash, said the Government had been working on this rural-focused integrated training approach since coming to office.

“Stakeholders want this innovative approach to rural health services and we are delivering,” Minister Nash said.

“The Australian Government invests more than \$1 billion a year in programmes to build the health workforce.

“However, training has not been well targeted. For example, in 2014, the overwhelming majority of funded clinical placements (78 per cent) were in metropolitan areas, not rural Australia where we need them. This is the aim of our new approaches – to target investment where it is most needed.

“Our objective is to provide the most effective support for health students to train in areas of need.”

The largest amount of health student training will continue to occur in public hospitals, with the Commonwealth and States and Territories jointly contributing \$842.3 million in funding for Teaching, Training and Research (TTR) under the National Health Reform (NHR) Agreement in 2014-15.

**Other rural and remote health workforce initiatives outlined in the MYEFO include:**

### **Multidisciplinary Training**

Funding of \$130.0 million will be redirected to expand the longstanding flagship Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) programme and support clinical placements in non-traditional settings. Its focus will be on addressing workforce shortages across the health disciplines, building on the investment in long term medical student training and enhancing the resources available to support high quality training in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions.

The RHMT currently funds a network of 17 Rural Clinical Schools and 11 University Departments of Rural Health. Under the new funding, this rural network will be added to through establishing three new multidisciplinary training sites, most likely in the Broome and Kimberley region of Western Australia, southern and central New South Wales, and south east Queensland.

In addition, new funds will be provided to effectively double the investment in the multidisciplinary training target delivered by those universities who already operate a University Department of Rural Health. These collaborative rural training institutions support high quality rural placements for health students from across Australia, helping to ensure rural communities can build relationships with the full health workforce team of future doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals.

Alongside the RHMT programme expansion, a competitive funding pool of up to \$5 million a year will be established to help nursing, midwifery and allied health students to train in the private sector.

### **Commitment to Northern Australia**

In recognition of the Government's commitment to develop northern Australia, annual funding of \$500,000 will be provided to the Greater Northern Australia Regional Training Network (GNARTN). GNARTN operates across QLD and WA above the Tropic of Capricorn and in the NT and this funding means GNARTN will continue to drive its collaborative work agenda across northern Australia. This includes building the current and future health workforce in this vast region.

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