

Communique

Specialist Medical Colleges Roundtable – 3 December 2021.

The Minister for Regional Health, the Hon Dr David Gillespie MP, hosted a roundtable on 3 December 2021 with all 13 non-GP specialist medical colleges (Colleges) to discuss the maldistribution of specialist doctors in rural and remote Australia and possible avenues to work together to resolve the issues.

Minister Gillespie outlined his expectations of Colleges in terms of their important role in leading reform in this area. He noted that significant change driven by the Colleges, State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth Government is required.

During the roundtable, Colleges provided insight into innovative approaches they are implementing to address rural workforce shortages, including inter-College collaboration on training pathways and education components. All Colleges acknowledged continued work needs to be done to tackle maldistribution of the workforce.

The Colleges also noted their support for the Australian Government's investment through the Specialist Training Program and Integrated Regional Training Pathways, and welcomed the new Flexible Approach to Training in Expanded Settings program.

Minister Gillespie initiated a collaborative '*Call to Action*' to work towards improving access to quality specialist medical care for all Australians, regardless of their geographic location.

'Call to Action' strategies will focus on the reform of the existing specialist workforce landscape, largely led by the recommendations of the National Medical Workforce Strategy (the Strategy) due for release in early 2022.

The Strategy will guide reform actions against five priorities, including rebalancing the supply and distribution of doctors across specialties and locations and building the generalist capability of the medical workforce.

In line with the Strategy, roundtable discussion identified initial focus areas for action, including:

- a greater emphasis on training generalist specialists;
- networking between metropolitan and rural health settings;
- accreditation requirements with emphasis on remote supervision where possible; and
- increasing the duration of time trainee specialists spend training rurally with a view to encouraging trainees to continue to work in rural areas well after their training has ended.

Similarly, harmonisation and cross-collaboration across the specialist medical workforce arena is pivotal to boosting the capacity of specialist medical doctors beyond metropolitan settings. The Commonwealth Government looks forward to working with Colleges and State and Territory Governments to tackle this issue.

Participants agreed to meet again in the first half of 2022 to further develop this work.

Roundtable participants

- The Minister for Regional Health, the Hon Dr David Gillespie MP
- [Australasian College of Dermatologists](#)
- [Australasian College for Emergency Medicine](#)
- [Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians](#)
- [Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists](#)
- [College of Intensive Care Medicine](#)
- [Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators](#)
- [Royal Australasian College of Physicians](#)
- [Royal Australasian College of Surgeons](#)
- [Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists](#)
- [Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists](#)
- [Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists](#)
- [Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists](#)
- [Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia](#)
- The Department of Health