

MEDIA RELEASE

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Keep medical student numbers on hold

The Federal Government must not increase the number of medical student places for at least two years or it could threaten the high standard of the training of the country's medical graduates, the Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand have warned.

'It is important that there is no increase in the number of student places and medical schools in Australia, so we can ensure there is no compromise in the quality of teaching that students receive,' said Medical Deans' Secretary, Professor Justin Beilby.

Medical student training places, usually in hospitals and primary care, allow students to learn the vital practical aspects of medicine that accompanies their academic study.

'At the moment, we do not have enough quality training places for students across the country, in both urban and rural settings. Any increase in student numbers will mean more clinical training places, which at this time we do not have.'

Professor Beilby said while Medical Deans welcomed recent Federal Government initiatives to increase and support clinical training places for students, this was still not enough to allow an increase in the number of students studying medicine.

The Commonwealth is currently providing up to \$67.5 million in increased clinical training capacity for Australia's health workforce (including other disciplines such as nursing, dentistry, social work and physiotherapy).

'While we welcome any such initiative, there must be no accompanying increase in the number of medical students until we are certain that we can deliver any extra clinical training in these new sites at a high quality,' Professor Beilby said.

'If we have a new medical school or extra places before then, it will cause significant problems.'

Australia's medical schools are currently undergoing significant growth, with student numbers growing strongly. In 2006, Australia had 1,335 medical graduates (not including international students), and this number is set to jump to 3,108 in 2014, as new medical schools come on line and increased numbers at established schools move through their programs.

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