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No new schools before 2014, say Deans

Medical Deans Australia and Zealand does not support the creation of new medical schools or any significant increase in medical student numbers in Australia until the health system is strengthened to adequately train the current boom in medical students.

‘Currently, we do not have the resources in places to ensure that all current medical students will have the vocational training to become fully qualified practising doctors,’ said Acting President, Professor Michael Hensley.

‘We are undergoing a boom in student numbers, but there are not enough clinical training places, and not enough internships and vocational training places for those students who graduate.’

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

Once students graduate, they need to spend one year in a hospital internship in order to have a basic registration as a doctor but they need a further 4 to 8 years in hospitals and primary care to complete their training in order to work as General practitioners and specialists.

‘Before we consider adding new schools or more students, we need Australia’s health system to be able to accommodate the current growth which reaches its peak in graduates in 2014 but not in the need for vocational training places until 2020, Professor Hensley said.

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; 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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