

Media Release
25 September 2012

Act now or lose 150-plus doctors

Australia faces losing more than 150 locally trained doctors unless a decision is made this week to create new intern places, the head of the country's peak medical education body has warned.

President of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand Professor Justin Beilby said unless the Health Ministers came to a decision at their meeting in Canberra tomorrow (Wednesday 26 September), time would run out.

'Some State Governments and some State Health Ministers have simply dropped the ball on this issue,' said Professor Beilby. 'For years they have known this day was coming, and they are still dithering.'

'Everyone knows we have a chronic shortage of doctors in Australia, and these locally trained international medical students want to stay in this country and work here,' Professor Beilby said.

'These young doctors will help ensure Australia's health workforce needs are met.'

About 3,000 medical students will graduate at the end of this year. All must complete a one-year internship – often in a hospital – to become fully qualified as a doctor.

While all Australian students and about two-thirds of the 500-plus international students seeking an internship in Australia have found an intern place for 2013, more than 150 international students look set to miss out.

'This discussion has been going on for months and months. The lack of action is a disgrace,' Professor Beilby said.

'New places are not created overnight. They need to be properly accredited and that takes time. And everyone knows that time is almost up.'

Professor Beilby said Medical Deans had been working hard and negotiating in good faith with all parties over many months to ensure a positive outcome.

'We are open to ideas on how to resolve this issue, but it must be done urgently. We need leadership, or we will lose these Australian-trained doctors forever.'

Medical Deans is made up of the Deans of Australia's 18 university medical schools and the two New Zealand schools.

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