

Media Release**4 June 2013****New medical schools 'a mistake', says new President**

The newly elected President of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand has warned against politicians supporting a new rural medical school in the upcoming federal election campaign.

'What Australia does not need are more rural medical schools in an attempt to increase the number of doctors working in rural Australia,' said Professor Peter Smith, who is Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of New South Wales.

'What we do need are better training opportunities for doctors based in rural and regional areas, which would encourage them to stay in those areas where there are acknowledged doctor shortages.'

This included improved regional vocational training opportunities and more intern places in regional hospitals, Professor Smith said.

'We are strongly supportive of continuity of medical training in regional areas and we are keen to work with medical colleges to progress this so that people living outside the metropolitan centres have better access to general physicians, psychiatrists, surgeons and the like.'

Professor Smith said Australia now had a plentiful supply of new medical graduates, with numbers jumping sharply in recent years.

'More than 3,400 new students are set to graduate as doctors at the end of this year. To create a new medical school of any sort, even if done with the best of intentions, would be a mistake.'

Professor Smith, who was elected as President yesterday, said a priority of his two-year appointment was to continue Medical Deans' work in Indigenous health. 'We can be proud of what we are doing in this space, not only in training Indigenous doctors but in ensuring non-Indigenous doctors have a cultural understanding of the needs of the Indigenous community.'

'It is vital we continue this work and strengthen the partnerships we have built with the Indigenous doctors' organisations (AIDA and TeORA) and our own leaders in Indigenous medical education.'

Professor Smith also said Medical Deans wanted to ensure that governments provided adequate funding for medical research, particularly research in hospital settings.

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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