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Media Release

## SURVEY REVEALS UNIQUE SNAPSHOT OF FUTURE DOCTORS

A comprehensive survey of more than 2000 newly minted medical graduates, provides a unique snapshot of the origins, dreams, expectations and frustrations of Australia's future doctors.

The questionnaire, conducted by the Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand and to be released at the annual conference, was sent to all of Australia's 19 medical schools prior to the graduation of their final year medical students in 2015. The survey asked questions about demographics, birthplace, career goals, rural versus metropolitan origin and intended residence.

The study found that

- over 83% of medical graduates are interested in becoming involved in teaching;
- there has been an increase in those for whom the financial benefits of being a doctor has **no impact** on their preferred area of medicine as a career;
- the number of graduates who have a partner has increased from nearly 41% in 2011 to 49% in 2015
- In 2015 36.5% of medical graduates indicated their first preference region of future practice was outside a capital city compared to 32% in 2011. In 2015 over 18% nominated a major urban centre such as Wollongong, Geelong, Cairns or Gosford, 12% a regional city or large town and 6% a smaller town or community.

The Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand have been collecting data on demographic, education and career intentions of medical students since 2008, gathering a dataset of more than 30,000 participants. This is the second year the Deans has conducted a single on line survey of final year students.

Professor Nicholas Glasgow, President of Medical Deans, commented that a standout trend from the survey is the "consistently high percentage of final year medical graduates interested in teaching (83%) and/or research (62%). Academics or clinicians undertaking teaching and research are crucial in developing the next generation of doctors. It is a positive sign that so many graduates envisage contributing both to the education of students and to evidence based healthcare research.

A key challenge for policy makers and Government is to convert the interest medical graduates have in teaching and research into a career choice. This requires continued investment in research and the establishment of integrated clinical academic training pathways."

According to the CEO of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand, Carmel Tebbutt, "the data collected provides an important tool for the planning of future generations of doctors. Since 2008 the Annual Medical Students Workforce Survey has provided a range of information from demographics, satisfaction, rural versus metropolitan origin and destination

and other information that are crucial for the development and planning for all Australia's medical workforce," she said.

"Importantly the Medical Student Outcome Database, provides medical schools with invaluable feedback on both what their graduates are like, and their future career intentions. The MSOD can help answer important questions such as how to improve the distribution of the medical workforce in rural and regional Australia."

In detail the study reveals some interesting facts such as:

- In 2015 36.5% of medical graduates indicated their first preference region of future practice was outside a capital city with 18.7% nominating a major urban centre such as Wollongong, Geelong, Cairns or Gosford, 11.8% a regional city or large town such as Alice Springs, Dubbo, Bunbury or Launceston, 4.2% a smaller town (10 000 – 24 999 population size) and 1.8% a small community
- 31 % of medical students come from outside capital city, with 11.5% from major urban centres, 7.8% from a regional city or large town, 4.2% from a smaller town and 7.5% from a small community.
- The bulk of medical students, not surprisingly, come from Australia (64%) with the next biggest group coming from Canada (4.4%) followed by Malaysia at 4%. The US and India provide almost an equivalent number of students at 1.6% and 1.8% respectively.
- The top four intended areas of future practice have remained the same over the past five years: adult medicine/internal medicine/physician; general practice; surgery; and paediatrics and child health.
- The number of graduates registering an interest in research remains relatively consistent over the past years at around 60% plus with a five year trend pointing to an increase
- More than 83% of survey participants who had completed a prior degree or certificate had done so in the fields of Science, Medical Science or Health/Allied Health while 9.4% had completed a postgraduate degree
- The level of satisfaction for all medical school programs has remained constant since 2011 with around 75% either satisfied or very satisfied with their medical course
- Since 2011 there has been an increase (from 18.7% to 24.2% in 2015) in proportion of graduates who say that financial prospects have no influence at all on their preferred area of medicine as a career, while the percentage of those for whom financial prospects are very important has remained relatively steady at around 25%
- For the first time, more than half (53.6%) of graduates reported that the financial costs of medical school/education debts did not influence their preferred area of medicine as a career, an increase of 5% over the previous year (*these 2 tables refer to the influence on their preferred area of future practice of medicine*)
- However more than one third of those surveyed said that the number of years required to complete training had a significant impact on their choice of preferred area of medicine while those that said this had no impact rose by almost 5% since 2011.

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