

Media Release

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OVER A THIRD OF MEDICAL GRADUATES WANT A CAREER IN RURAL AND REGIONAL PRACTICE

Data from final year students at medical schools across Australia highlights the continuing trend of more graduates wanting a career working outside capital cities, with over a third stating that is their preference.

An in-depth survey has been run by Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand each year since 2005, with more than 32,000 students providing feedback to date. Students are asked a range of questions on their demographics and background, experiences during medical school, and career interests and intentions.

This year's report reveals that 36% of graduates are seeking a career based outside of a capital city, an increase of 2% from last year and 6% higher than 2014.

"This very strong result reflects the work of medical schools in establishing teaching infrastructure and well-supported positions in regional and rural areas, and in fostering and championing the rewards of rural practice," said President of Medical Deans, Professor Richard Murray.

"We know that growing the numbers of rural doctors is complex and involves many aspects. The work of our Rural Clinical Schools, and recently of the Regional Training Hubs, has shown that we can achieve these good outcomes when there are good policy decisions being made, sufficient and long-term support, and an active focus on ensuring students' have a rewarding and positive experience when they undertake rural clinical placements."

"We are also very pleased that so many of our graduates – over 43% – want a career involving Indigenous health" Professor Murray said. "Continually embedding and improving the teaching of Indigenous health and culturally safe and responsive care across our medical school curricula has been a strong focus for medical schools and it is pleasing to see this number continuing to grow each year."

Other highlights of the study include:

- 86% of graduates want a career involving teaching, with 11% undecided and only 3% indicating no interest
- 63% graduates are seeking a future involving research; very similar to last year's figure
- The "atmosphere/culture typical of the discipline" continues to top the list of factors that influence students' preferred future specialty, as it has for the last 5 years
- Graduates' most preferred specialties have remained unchanged, with the top 13 mirroring those indicated last year
- Consistently high levels of satisfaction with the program at their medical school and in preparing graduates for their next stage of training and working as an intern.

Medical Deans CEO, Helen Craig, noted that the Medical Schools Outcomes Database "is a unique, national source of comprehensive data that aren't otherwise available". Ms Craig added that "this data provides valuable information and insights to groups including governments, health workforce agencies, universities and medical colleges and supports their policy decisions and plans to ensure Australia and New Zealand have the brightest and best-prepared medical graduates ready to meet the future needs of our communities."

Further details of the survey reveal that:

- The most popular clinical specialties have remain unchanged, with medical graduates continuing to favour adult medicine/internal medicine/physician; general practice; surgery; anaesthesia; and paediatrics and child health
- Specialties that remain less popular include: occupational and environmental medicine; pain medicine; sexual health medicine; rehabilitation medicine; medical administration; and addiction medicine
- The number of students satisfied with their medical program has remained constant over the five years – with 76% satisfied or very satisfied compared to 10% unsatisfied or very unsatisfied
- 24% students overall state they have come from a rural background, which has remained consistent over the last 3 years
- Since 2014 student rural club membership has increased, from 32% to 38%
- This years' cohort is younger than previous years, with more graduates aged under 25 and fewer over 40 years old
- The numbers of students in paid employment or with students loans has increased quite substantially in the last year, with each increasing by approximately 6%
- The factors that had most influence on graduates' most preferred area of medicine remain very constant, with "atmosphere/work culture typical of the discipline" remaining the prime motivator, followed by "Alignment with personal values" and "Influence of partner's occupation", "Financial costs of vocational training", and "Financial costs of medical school education and/or debt" remaining the least important

The 2018 Medical Schools Outcomes Database Report can be accessed [here](#).

The Medical Schools Outcomes Database project receives funding from the Australian government Department of Health. The National Data Report 2018 was prepared with the assistance of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

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Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand Inc. (Medical Deans) is the peak body representing professional entry-level medical education, training and research in Australia and New Zealand. The organisation's membership comprises the Deans of Australia's 21 medical schools and the two New Zealand schools. As well as having an extensive representative and advocacy role in the advancement of health and education, Medical Deans auspice and manage a number of significant projects in relation to the medical workforce, including the Medical Schools Outcomes Database, Indigenous health through the LIME Network, graduate competencies and benchmarking, clinical supervision, students health and well-being, and social accountability.