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80 more rurally trained Australian doctors a welcome start

Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) has welcomed the government's recognition that we need to invest in more Australian-trained medical graduates to ensure we have the future doctors needed.

"The disruption caused by the COVID pandemic highlighted that we have become far too reliant bringing doctors in from overseas" said Professor Richard Murray, President of Medical Deans. "When the borders closed, that ground to a halt and we're seeing severe doctor shortages as a result".

"We are very grateful to our international colleagues who come to Australia to work in areas of need; particularly in our country towns – indeed, without them many would have no doctor at all. However, the fact that each year we bring into Australia almost as many overseas-trained doctors as there are Australian students graduating from our own medical schools shows an imbalance" he said.

The latest government medical workforce data¹ available shows that in 2018, 6,513 first time (i.e., new) registrants entered the medical workforce that year. Of these, 2,775 were graduates from Commonwealth Supported Places at Australian medical schools, with an additional 250 fee-paying domestic graduates and 450 international students². This means that over 3,000 of these new doctors were trained and recruited from overseas.

"Tonight's Budget announcement is a welcome start to addressing this imbalance, although 80 new doctors won't fix the problem" Professor Murray said.

Professor Murray reiterated that continued and accelerated work is also needed so that more of our new doctors choose to pursue careers in the locations and disciplines our communities need.

"It's vital that our new graduates are actively encouraged and supported into rural careers and specialties such as general practice. We know that recruiting students and trainees from, and training in and for, rural communities makes a difference. Our rural campuses enable medical students to undertake their whole medical school training there, but these graduates also need to be able to stay in the regions to continue their training" he said. "We don't want to lose them to the city as, too often, we don't get them back. Our Medical Schools Outcomes Database³ shows that a third of our graduates would prefer a career working outside a capital city. We need to make sure they have that opportunity".

For enquiries or to arrange interviews, please contact: **Helen Craig, MDANZ CEO, on 0449 109 721**

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 medical education, Medical Deans auspice and manage a number of projects in relation to medical education and the medical workforce, including the Medical Schools Outcomes Database (MSOD), student health, Indigenous health and the LIME Network, graduate competencies, and social accountability and inclusion.

¹ <https://hwd.health.gov.au/resources/publications/factsheet-mdcl-2018-full.pdf>

² <https://medicaldeans.org.au/data/data-dashboard/>

³ <https://medicaldeans.org.au/data/medical-schools-outcomes-database-reports/>