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## Teaching and training is the foundation to growing and sustaining our rural doctors

Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) welcomes the AMA joining the call for a greater focus on the need to grow, support and sustain Australia's rural medical workforce.

"Rural medical practice offers a rich and rewarding career and a multitude of opportunities for doctors, but we continue to battle with shortages in country areas despite having a strengthening evidence base on what fosters rural interest and enables rural careers" said Professor Michelle Leech, Medical Deans' President.

"Now is the time to take a more strategic and coordinated approach. What is vital though – and too often overlooked – is the role teaching and training plays in the development and support of the rural medical and primary care workforce".

"Early-career doctors need to be able to see visible post graduate medical training pathways that can be commenced in rural settings and continue their rural learning experience gained at medical school. We know this makes a difference to their pursuit of a rural career" Professor Leech noted.

Data collated by Medical Deans reveals that over half of the medical students who undertake a rural placement of longer than one year expressed a preference to subsequently practice in a regional town, smaller town or small community. This compares with 36 percent for those where the duration was 6 to 12 months, 13 percent where it was up to 6 months, and 8 percent for those not undertaking a rural placement.

Professor Leech also stressed the importance of doctors being able to progress careers involving teaching and supervision, research and leadership. "Having these other aspects are vital to a doctor's own professional and personal development, and to helping them sustain what can often be a challenging job."

Medical Deans' data shows the consistently high level of interest from medical graduates in having a career involving teaching (83% of the 2022 graduating cohort) and research (56%).

"Australia needs a healthcare system where teaching, training and research is intrinsic regardless of the setting and not an optional add on. Nowhere is this more important than in rural areas and in primary care. We need reforms to primary care to recognise that supervision is key to facilitate safe and rewarding training in community-based settings. There is also a need for location-based solutions with a multi-faceted approach to embedding training in, for, and with rural communities" stated Professor Leech.

Medical Deans' 2021 paper '[Training Tomorrow's Doctors: all pulling in the same direction](#)' provides a series of recommendations to reform the medical training continuum to deliver a sustainable medical workforce of the right size, shape, focus and distribution. Their recently released paper '[The Doctors our Communities Need: Building, Sustaining and Supporting the General Practice Workforce in Australia and New Zealand](#)' outlines the views of Australian and New Zealand medical schools on the necessary reforms to build the skilled, sufficient and sustained GP workforce our countries need.

### **Contact**

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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 projects in relation to medical education and the medical workforce, including the Medical Schools Outcomes Database (MSOD), Indigenous health and the LIME Network, graduate competencies and quality assurance, student health, research, and social accountability.*