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Increase medical school places alongside workplace teaching and training reform, urge Medical Deans

Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) says the increase in Commonwealth supported medical places recommended in the landmark Australian Universities Accord is a critical investment that will help address regional workforce shortages and improve access to primary care.

Medical Deans President Professor Michelle Leech AM said: “The Australian Universities Accord outlines an ambitious blueprint for long-term reform that will ensure our higher education sector remains a strong, vibrant contributor to Australia’s society, economy and labour market.”

“We are pleased that the Accord recognises and supports the need for a substantial increase in the number of Commonwealth supported medical school places. The longstanding doctor shortages in our rural communities and the lack of GPs in our training pipeline are the greatest risks facing Australia’s health system. Patients are feeling the brunt of this every day,” said Professor Leech.

To ensure that these additional medical places address current and future workforce shortages, Medical Deans is urging immediate steps to embed stronger supervision support for teaching, training and research more effectively into community and primary care settings¹.

“Increased investment in primary care as a teaching and training environment is crucial in developing a skilled health workforce that is responsive to community needs – particularly in regional, rural and remote communities where different skills are required,” said Professor Leech.

Medical Deans also welcomed the strong focus on widening participation in higher education and called for additional funding to better support students from under-represented groups to enter and progress through university.

“Australia’s medical schools have made substantial inroads to increasing the participation of students from previously under-represented groups including First Nations peoples. In the last five years in Australia, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students commencing at and graduating from medical schools has increased by over 70%.

“We know however, that more support is needed for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and more flexibility needed for students in different situations. It is vital that universities are supported to be able to deliver this.

“Australia has huge potential within our own population to attract and train the doctors our communities need. The Australian Universities Accord outlines a pathway to support this and we look forward to supporting the next phase of implementation ” said Professor Leech.

¹ Medical Deans’ Position Paper on Building the General Practitioner workforce, September 2023
<https://medicaldeans.org.au/resource/the-doctors-our-communities-need-building-sustaining-and-supporting-the-general-practice-workforce-in-australia-and-new-zealand-position-paper/>



About Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand

Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand Inc. represents and supports the 24 medical schools across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand in their cutting-edge medical education, training and research to recruit, develop and nurture outstanding medical graduates to enable our communities to continue to access world-class health services.

Medical Deans [annual survey of medical graduates](#) provides critical information and insights on the make-up of our future doctors, including demographics, education, experience, and future career preferences.

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