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## Recognition of rural generalism provides a major boost to rural learning opportunities

Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) welcomes the recognition of rural generalism as a medical specialty within general practice, as announced over the weekend by the Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health, Disability and Ageing. [Minister Butler's media release](#)

“This recognition of rural generalism is a landmark moment for rural health in Australia. It acknowledges the unique expertise across primary care, emergency medicine and advanced practice that rural generalists bring to their communities. It also reflects the dedication to delivering equitable health outcomes for rural communities of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine,” said Professor Michelle Leech AM, President of Medical Deans. “This recognition will help ensure rural Australians have access to high-quality, comprehensive healthcare while also supporting the sustainability of the rural medical workforce.”

Recognition of a specialty in rural medicine for rural communities is an important step towards realising Medical Deans’ long-standing vision of building a strong pipeline of rural doctors through place-based learning opportunities and workforce solutions that support vibrant, multifaceted careers. These positions are laid out in our 2024 position paper, [Thriving Rural Doctors](#).

“We are sure that our students will welcome this news, as more and more of them are expressing interest in rural generalism,” noted Professor Leech. As the number of students undertaking rural learning experiences through Rural Clinical Schools and University Departments of Rural Health continues to grow, interest in rural careers more broadly and specifically rural generalism grows. “We see a dose-dependent effect of rural learning experiences on future rural career intention in our Medical Schools Outcomes Database data: the longer students train rurally, the more likely they are to prefer a rural career,” Professor Leech said. “We’ve been tracking the number of graduating medical students stating a preference for a career as a rural generalist since 2021. During this period, rural generalism has consistently been the first choice for between 6% and 8% of domestic students.”

Medical Deans recognises the invaluable contribution rural generalists make as educators across the training continuum. The generalist scope of practice of rural generalists, combined with their work across multiple levels of the healthcare system, makes them excellent educators and role models for students learning in and about rural health. “Rural generalists are not only vital clinicians but also outstanding teachers and mentors,” said Professor Leech. “Their commitment to student learning and to supporting the next generation of rural doctors is at the heart of what makes our rural health system sustainable.”

Ensuring the supervision of medical students remains financially viable is crucial to growing the rural generalist workforce. “You cannot be what you cannot see. We need to ensure that as many rural generalists as possible are supported to teach and supervise medical students if we are to increase the number of graduates choosing this career path,” Professor Leech said.

Medical Deans is calling for a modest increase to the PIP (Teaching) Payment, which supports general practitioners and rural generalists to supervise students, and looks forward to working with government and sector partners to support rural generalists to thrive as clinicians, educators and leaders in rural health.

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*Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand Inc. represents and supports the 25 medical schools across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand in their cutting-edge medical education, work-integrated 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 valuable information and insights on the make-up of our future doctors, including demographics, education, experience, and future career preferences.*

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