

MEDIA RELEASE

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Future doctors left out of paid placements despite mounting financial pressure

New national data released today by Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) shows a decade-long shift in how medical students are supporting themselves through their degrees, and increasingly relying on paid employment alongside Centrelink payments to cover living and placement costs. The release follows the Australian Government's decision to expand the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) to ten additional allied health disciplines from 1 July 2027, while continuing to exclude medical students from the scheme.

Data from Medical Deans' Medical Schools Outcomes Database (MSOD), which has tracked the income sources of Australian medical students since 2014, shows medical students continue to be highly reliant on Centrelink support and paid employment.

Medical Deans Vice President Professor Ruth Kearon said the trend was a warning sign. *"Medical students are not taking on more paid work because they have spare time. They are doing it to cover rent, food and placement costs during their training to become doctors."*

"Full-time clinical placements leave little room for paid work, and many students are now trying to do both at once. That is not a sustainable model, and it is not one that serves patients, students or the future health workforce"

The MSOD data also shows the extent to which medical students are now stacking multiple, often precarious, sources of income to get through their degree. Almost two in three respondents (61%) draw on three or more separate income sources simultaneously, and 42.9% report needing both government income support and paid employment just to make ends meet, compared with fewer than one in four (24%) who need neither.

Medical students undertake on average 3000 hours of mandatory, unpaid clinical placement across their degree, often on a full-time basis that leaves little to no capacity for paid work. Last month's CPP expansion will extend a means-tested payment of up to \$338.60 a week to students to a number of allied health professionals. Unlike the other professions, Medical Deans has extensive data on the graduating medical students. Medicine remains the largest, most placement-intensive pre-registration health degree not covered by the scheme.

"We strongly welcome paid prac being extended to more allied health students, that is a genuine win for those students and for the workforce. But it leaves an increasingly hard-to-justify equity gap for medical students. They face the longest and most demanding placement hours of any health discipline, and they are now the only major cohort of placement-heavy students without access to this support,"

Medical Deans is calling on the Australian Government to urgently extend CPP eligibility to medical students, and to treat needs-based financial support during mandatory placement as a workforce sustainability measure. Waiting for the independent review of the CPP scheduled for 2028 is not acceptable.

“Evidence from our own student population tells us that rural, regional and first-in-family students are exactly the students we most need in the future medical workforce, are disproportionately affected by placement poverty. If we are serious about a sustainable, well-distributed medical workforce, we cannot keep asking these students to shoulder the financial stress of their own training,” Professor Kearon said.

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Media contact

Anita Hobson-Powell | Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand

Ahobson-powell@medicaldeans.org.au

0400 519 800

Notes to editors

About Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand: Medical Deans is the peak body representing medical education providers across Australia and New Zealand, working to ensure a high-quality, sustainable medical workforce for both countries.

About the Medical Schools Outcomes Database (MSOD): MSOD is a national longitudinal survey of medical students and graduates across Australia and New Zealand, tracking student demographics, income sources, career intentions and outcomes from commencement through to early practice. Data cited in this release is drawn from MSOD collections 2014–2025.

Data snapshot

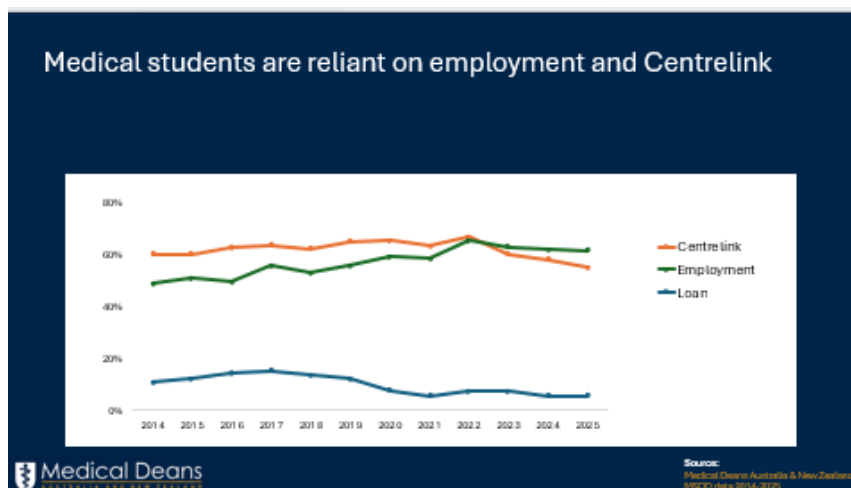


Figure 1: Medical student income sources, 2014–2025. Source: MSOD data, Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand.

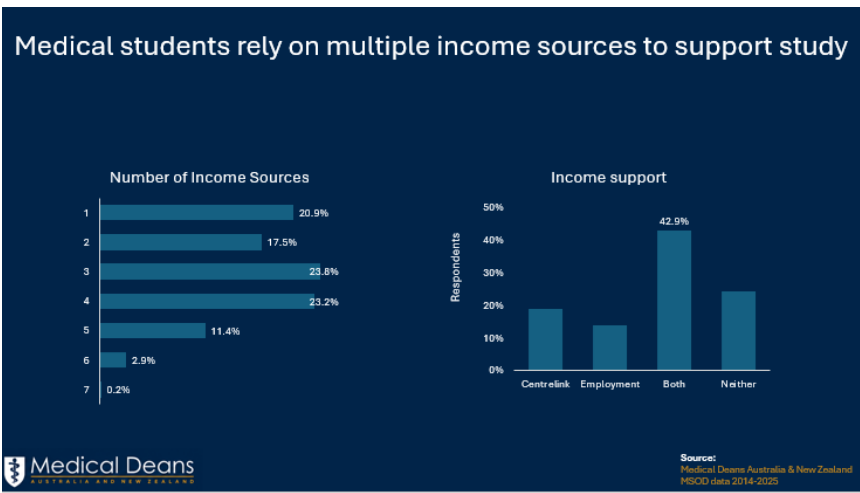


Figure 2: Number of income sources and income support reliance among medical students. Source: MSOD data, Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand.