

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia's medical workforce increasingly reliant on overseas-trained doctors, new figures reveal

Australia is becoming increasingly dependent on internationally trained doctors to staff its health system, with new national registration data showing that fewer than half of all doctors entering practice were graduates of Australian medical schools.

Figures released by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) in November 2025 show that just 46 per cent of first-time medical registrants in 2024–25 were domestic graduates. The majority of new entrants to the profession were trained overseas, with a substantial proportion having migrated from low- and middle-income countries where medical workforce shortages are often more severe than in Australia.

Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans), the peak body representing the 25 medical schools across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, says the figures raise real and pressing questions about the nation's approach to medical workforce planning, and whether Australia is quietly outsourcing its responsibility to train its own doctors.

Professor Kirsty Forrest, President of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand, said the data should prompt a serious national conversation about medical workforce self-sufficiency.

“For more than a decade, Australia has relied on internationally trained doctors to fill critical gaps in our health workforce, particularly in rural, regional and outer metropolitan communities. That contribution has been enormously valuable, and we are grateful for it. But when fewer than half of the doctors entering our workforce each year have trained here, it tells us that domestic medical education and training capacity has not kept pace with the country's own workforce needs.”

“This is not a sustainable long-term strategy. It leaves Australia exposed to global competition for medical talent, and it raises genuine ethical questions when so many of the doctors we depend on come from health systems that can least afford to lose them.”

Medical Deans notes that Australia's reliance on international medical graduates (IMGs) sits in tension with the World Health Organization's Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, which cautions high-income countries against building workforce strategies around the recruitment of health professionals trained in countries facing their own critical shortages.

“We have an obligation, both to our own health system and to our international partners, to build a medical workforce that is largely self-sufficient. That means training more doctors here in Australia and doing so in the locations and specialties where the need is greatest, particularly rural, regional and remote communities.”

“The data shows that when we select domestic students from areas of need, and train them in these areas, they are more likely to go into practice in communities that need them the most,” said Professor Forrest.

Medical Deans has consistently advocated for sustained, needs-based investment in domestic medical school places, clinical training capacity and rural training pathways. While recent Commonwealth investment in additional medical school places is welcome, Medical Deans says the pace of growth in training capacity must be matched to Australia's actual healthcare needs, rather than treating international recruitment as the default solution to workforce shortfalls.

“Growing the number of Commonwealth-supported medical school places (CSPs) for existing schools is an important first step. But it also needs to be matched with investment in clinical placements, supervision capacity, training infrastructure and specialist pathways, so that every domestic medical graduate has a genuine pathway into the workforce. Without that, we will continue to under-produce doctors at home while relying on other countries to make up the shortfall,” said Professor Forrest.

Medical Deans is calling on governments to commit to a long-term, transparent national medical workforce plan that sets out a clear pathway to greater self-sufficiency, including targets for the proportion of the medical workforce trained domestically, and sustained funding certainty for medical schools to plan and deliver training at the scale required.

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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.

Data snapshot



Figure 1: Medical Deans Australia & New Zealand AHPRA Registry data 2026.