

Media release
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Rural doctors welcome NSW Government support for rural generalist pathway

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Rural Doctors Association of NSW (RDA NSW) have welcomed an announcement by the NSW Government that it will introduce a rural generalist training program in NSW. The program's purpose will be to deliver more doctors with advanced skills to NSW rural communities.

NSW Health Minister, Jillian Skinner, announced the Government's commitment to implement the program while speaking at the NSW Rural Doctors Network and RDA NSW annual conference in Sydney at the weekend.

The Government is currently forming a working group to further develop the program.

"It is great to see yet another state investing in a rural generalist training program, to deliver more doctors with advanced skills to rural and remote towns" RDA NSW President, Dr David Richmond, said.

"And it is particularly pleasing to see the NSW Government making it a priority so soon after its election to get this important program up and running. There are many towns across country NSW that have been desperately short of rural generalist doctors for many years. As a result, accessing local health and hospital services for many rural NSW residents has become more and more difficult.

"The Government's announcement follows significant RDA NSW lobbying on this issue over many years. We strongly welcome the Government's decision to implement this program, and we're very keen to participate on the new working group and look forward to being included in the working party enacted to oversee the implementation of the program."

RDAA President, Dr Paul Mara, said NSW joins a growing number of states in making a pro-active investment in the future of rural doctor training.

"Queensland's Rural Generalist Pathway is already delivering doctors with the advanced training needed to practise competently and confidently in rural and regional towns" he said. "And this year, the new Victorian Government announced funding for a rural generalist training program in that state.

"Additionally, a recently-released SA Government report proposes an advanced rural skills training program to attract doctors to rural and remote practice, and provide them with the advanced skills needed in rural settings. We also understand that Western Australia and the Northern Territory are showing interest.

"At the national level, RDAA has been working with various stakeholder organisations on a proposal for a National Advanced Rural Training Program that would set overarching national principles and a national framework for rural generalist training, facilitate the national transferability of skills and qualifications, and underpin the delivery of advanced skills training in community-based practice, general practice and hospital settings.

"While there is still a long way to go, it is great to see progress at last in the critical area of rural generalist training.

"The combination of national and state programs will provide a well-lit path to guide young doctors in attaining the advanced skills required in rural practice, and help attract and deliver the next generation of rural generalist doctors to the bush."

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