

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Rural practices urged to apply as infrastructure grants are rolled out

**The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is urging rural medical practices across Australia to consider applying for Federal Government funding to expand and improve their practice infrastructure, as the next round of the Government's Primary Care Infrastructure Grants program gets underway.**

The \$52.5 million round of grants aims to help local doctors expand the services they offer to their communities. Around 200 grants will be available through this round of funding. The Government is directing at least one-third of the total funding available through the Primary Care Infrastructure Grants initiative to regional and remote Australia.

The grants can be used to upgrade or extend existing premises, such as by constructing specialised practice nurse facilities, clinical training rooms, treatment rooms fitted with the latest medical equipment, rooms for patients to attend preventative health education sessions, and facilities that support extended hours of service.

"For some time, the pressure has been building on medical practices across Australia to provide more clinical training places to meet the growing number of medical students and young doctors now graduating from our universities" RDAA Vice President, Dr Peter Rischbieth, said.

"While many rural practices are keen to provide more of these placements—given they have real potential to entice more medical students and young doctors to rural practice—the physical size of some practices means there is just not the space available to do so.

"Similarly, there is growing demand for rural practices to become the hub of healthcare in their communities, providing not just general practice care but also the 'real estate' through which allied health and community health services can be provided.

"Again, many rural practices would dearly love to be able to offer an expanded range of services, but space within these practices is often scarce...and this is where the Federal Government's Primary Care Infrastructure Grants program can assist.

"While we have some concerns around the very detailed process through which practices must work in order to apply for the grants, there is no doubt that some rural practices have been able to expand their clinical placements in part because of these grants, and also expand the range of health services they can provide to their patients.

"If nothing else, RDAA is encouraging rural and remote practices to at least look through the application documents and consider whether the grants can assist them to deliver the services their communities need.

"While the Federal Government's efforts to assist rural practices to expand their practice infrastructure is welcome, we continue to emphasise that this is just a 'bricks and mortar' element of a larger process for rebuilding health services in the bush—the most significant element remains the need for additional incentives that entice more doctors to move to the bush, and better support them once they are there."

**Applications for the grants close on 10 June. For more information, visit:**

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr11-ck-ck012.htm>

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/grant3421011>

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