

MEDIA RELEASE



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Proposed pathway ‘great news’ for rural SA communities

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has welcomed the release of a South Australian Government report that proposes the introduction of an advanced rural skills training pathway to attract doctors to rural and remote practice, and provide them with the skills needed to practise confidently and competently in rural settings.

While implementation of the pathway depends on SA Government funding, a report titled the *Road to rural general practice*—commissioned and released last week by the SA Government agency, Country Health SA— supports its establishment.

“It is very pleasing to see the case for rural generalist training being seriously considered and taken up by more and more states” RDAA President, Dr Paul Mara, said.

“Queensland’s Rural Generalist Pathway, which has been running for some years now, is already delivering doctors with the advanced training needed to practise competently and confidently in rural and regional towns.

“And this year, the new Victorian Government announced, in its very first budget, \$2.4 million in funding over four years for a rural generalist training pathway in that state. The pathway is explicitly aimed at increasing the number of doctors with advanced skills training in rural areas.

“NSW has also been undertaking consultations around the implementation of a pathway, and we understand that Western Australia and the Northern Territory are also showing some interest.

“At the national level, RDAA has been working with various stakeholder organisations on a proposal for a National Advanced Rural Training Pathway 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.

“In short, we are starting to see the pieces of the puzzle coming together.

“Just a few years ago rural medicine faced a bleak future, with many rural doctors nearing retirement age and finding it difficult to find young doctors with the advanced skills to replace them, particularly in areas like obstetrics, anaesthetics, accident and emergency medicine, Indigenous healthcare and advanced mental healthcare.

“While we still have a long way to go, clearly governments are starting to realise that advanced rural training pathways can provide a well-lit path to guide young doctors in attaining the advanced skills required in rural practice, and help deliver the next generation of rural generalist doctors to the bush.

“The ease with which they will be able to access advanced training, and the clinical training places they will be guaranteed, will start to make rural generalist practice a more appealing career option at a time when more young doctors are graduating from our universities, particularly if this training leads to increased recognition and remuneration that reflects the additional skills attained.”

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