

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 5 May 2011



Victoria backs advanced training pathway for rural doctors

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has applauded the decision by the Victorian Government to fund a dedicated training pathway for rural doctors in its first budget.

The Victorian Health Minister has confirmed that from \$2.4 million over four years will be provided to fund the program which is aimed at increasing the number of doctors with advanced skills training in rural areas.

Victoria's decision follows the success of Queensland's Rural Generalist Pathway that is attracting an increasing number of medical students into dedicated rural-orientated training.

Students in this program graduate with the skills and qualifications desperately needed in rural and remote communities, including primary care such as general practice; procedural skills including obstetrics, surgery and anaesthetics; and other advanced skills services such as paediatrics, psychology and Indigenous health.

RDAA President, Dr Paul Mara, said that the success of the Queensland model, along with this new establishment of a rural advanced skills training program by the Victorian Government, highlights the need for serious consideration of a national model based on similar principles.

"RDAA and other stakeholder groups are advocating for a National Advanced Rural Training Pathway to set a consistent framework for advanced skills training for rural generalist doctors Australia-wide," Dr Mara said.

"We desperately need to attract more young doctors to work in rural and remote areas and the proposed national pathway would equip them with the skills to work not only in primary care, but also to practise in fields such as emergency medicine, obstetrics, anaesthetics, acute mental health and Indigenous health.

"No new organisation or qualifications would be required; a national pathway could build on the existing training curricula and pathways of ACRRM and the RACGP, utilise existing training places and build on existing administrative mechanisms.

"What it would add, is a clearly supported and structured training pathway, recognition of the advanced skills gained by its graduates and a viable career option for doctors who want, and whose communities need, a mix of general practice and procedural work," Dr Mara said.

"These skills and practice flexibility would enable many more medical services to be delivered to rural and remote communities and importantly, also deliver highly skilled doctors to replace the many ageing rural doctors who are now close to retirement.

"Queensland and Victoria have realised that recognition of the complexity and isolation of rural practice and the provision of appropriate training is needed to attract more country doctors.

"Other states have also shown interest in establishing similar programs and we hope that the Federal Government will support the implementation of a National Advanced Rural Training Pathway to bring it together under a structured national approach."

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