

19 October 2023

## How do you find a doctor in the bush?

Peak medical leader panel to address workforce issues at national rural medical conference

Rural Medicine Australia 2023

18-21 October, Hobart

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The movers and shakers of rural medical workforce issues will be talking about what works, what doesn't and how to fix it, in a panel session tomorrow [20 October] at Rural Medicine Australia (RMA23).

**Dr Megan Belot, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA)** will be on the panel and said it would provide a rare opportunity to gather key medical leaders together to address the biggest issue affecting the medical workforce: maldistribution.

"We know that Australia has a lot of doctors, but are they working where we need them? Generally not," **Dr Belot said.**

"Tomorrow's panel will bring together the leaders of organisations representing general practice, colleges, Indigenous doctors and the Department of Health to discuss how we are working to reduce these shortages in the future.

"There is a pretty hefty reform agenda from the Government in the primary care sector currently in progress, and there are many opportunities coming our way to make these really impactful.

"The 10 year medical workforce plan is one of these, and we will talk about where are we at, and who is making real inroads into expanding training in rural settings," Dr Belot said.

The Presidents Breakfast panel will discuss the topic "*Medical Workforce – are we there yet?*" and participating in the panel will be:

- Dr Megan Belot, RDAA President
- Dr Dan Halliday, President of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM)
- Dr Nicole Higgins, President of the Royal Australian College of General Practice (RACGP)
- Dr Vijay Roach, Chair of the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC)
- Dr Simone Raye, President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA)
- Mr Matt Williams, First Assistant Secretary Department of Health

The discussion will be facilitated by multi-award winning producer and broadcaster, Dr Norman Swan.

**ACRRM President, Dr Dan Halliday**, said that in addition to government programs, the panel will also explore what the peak bodies and the non-GP medical colleges are doing to address the rural workforce shortages.

“We know that many of the speciality colleges have been working to increase their rural training, and it will be interesting to hear from the Chair of the Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges about how this is going,” **Dr Halliday said**.

“For general practice, we are well over half way through the first year of GP College-led training, and with the Presidents of ACRRM and RACGP on the panel we can get down into the nitty gritty of what has worked well and what it is that the Colleges wish they had done differently.

“So much work has gone into this transition across both Colleges and the Department of Health, it will be great to give the delegates a first-hand insight into what has been involved in pulling it off.

“Following the referendum, it is time for the peak bodies and medical leadership as a whole to pull together to work toward closing the gap on health outcomes for our First Nations people, and looking to the future and how we progress from here,” Dr Belot said.

“We particularly thank the Commonwealth Department of Health for sponsoring this session. It is always a sell-out crowd and having the Department both support and participate really makes a difference.”

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**Media are welcome to attend most sessions at RMA23, but must pre-register in advance by contacting one of the RMA Media Team on the contact numbers below.**

Find the program for RMA23 by [clicking here](#)

Find the full keynote speaker list for RMA23 by [clicking here](#)

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