

MEDIA RELEASE



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Spotters fees not the way to attract doctors

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is calling on the Australian Medical Association (AMA) Western Australian Branch to reverse its misguided approach of paying spotters fees for recruitment of overseas doctors.

RDAA has described as ill-advised the campaign put in place by AMA (WA) Branch President, Professor Gary Geelhoed, which pays spotters fees to entice doctors from overseas to work in Western Australia.

AMA (WA) is offering a \$3000 reward to members of the public who nominate a suitably trained overseas GP willing to go to work in the state.

While RDAA recognises the huge medical workforce difficulties faced in WA, there are far more prudent and practical ways of tackling the problem.

“Pressure needs to be applied to governments to offer the right package of incentives to get doctors out to rural and remote areas, where they are so desperately needed,” RDAA Vice President Dr Paul Mara said.

Over the past 10 to 15 years there have been literally thousands of doctors from overseas coming to work in Australia, in particular in rural Australia. These doctors have in many instances been forced to work in isolated areas with little support, minimal training and significant family hardship.

“Importing doctors as a policy to solve Australia’s medical workforce problems is not the solution and much more needs to be done to attract Australian graduates to rural and remote medical practice. Australia should stop stripping developing countries of their health professionals,” Dr Mara said.

“Australia is now graduating double the number of doctors from Australian universities compared to 10 years ago. We should be concentrating on providing these doctors with the facilities, skills and incentives to work in rural and remote areas, rather than forcing doctors from overseas to work in isolation.

“Where doctors from overseas want to work in rural areas they will be welcomed with open arms but then they and their families should receive all the benefits available to Australian citizens, such as access to Medicare and public education for their children, appropriate training where required and ongoing support.

“We have enough doctors being trained in Australia now so rather than paying spotters fees for overseas trained doctors we should attract these Australian trained doctors through supporting and rewarding them for rural practice.”

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