

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Rural Doctors Association of Australia drops support for 10-Year Moratorium on overseas-trained doctors

**The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has withdrawn its support for the Federal Government's 10-Year Moratorium on overseas-trained doctors.**

Now over 12 years into the policy, RDAA believes the Moratorium has failed as a tool to build a permanent and skilled medical workforce in the bush.

RDAA President Dr Nola Maxfield said Australia needs to reset the mindset that attracting doctors from overseas to work in rural and remote areas is the only solution to the serious workforce shortages we face.

"In my practice in Wonthaggi, in country Victoria, I have worked with many doctors from all over the world," Dr Maxfield said. "I have seen firsthand the excellent work overseas-trained doctors do in rural communities, their contribution is invaluable and we wouldn't be without them in rural towns Australia-wide.

"However, our over reliance on doctors from overseas to fill the gaping holes in the rural and remote health workforce is not right.

"At best the 10-Year Moratorium is nothing better than a bandaid solution; at worse it has delayed the implementation of any real initiatives to attract a sustainable, suitably-trained medical workforce to the bush.

"Rural and remote Australia is still desperately short of doctors and the health of rural people continues to suffer as a result. At the same time we are stripping many overseas countries in great need of the doctors they've paid to educate and train."

The 10-Year Moratorium forces overseas trained doctors to work in districts of workforce shortage for 10 years before being granted an unrestricted Medicare Provider Number, which allows them to practice anywhere.

Nearly 60% of rural doctors recently surveyed by the RDAA believed forcing overseas-trained doctors into rural locations for ten years was not helping them to recruit and retain a medical workforce in their town.

RDAA will lobby for the 10-Year Moratorium to be dropped and replaced with real incentives designed to attract suitably skilled and trained Australian and overseas doctors to where they are desperately needed.

RDAA believes these supports should include financial incentives, through higher Medicare rebates for rural doctors and professional supports through locum schemes, afterhours support, IT access and support for practice management and multidisciplinary health teams.

"Forcing people who don't want to go out bush and who are not properly trained and supported is not the solution to improving the health outcomes of rural communities into the future," Dr Maxfield said.

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