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Pre-Budget call: invest now to secure rural healthcare workforce

Rural Doctors Association of Australia 2026–27 Commonwealth Budget Submission

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is calling on the Federal Government to make targeted investments in the 2026–27 Commonwealth Budget to secure the future of healthcare for rural and remote communities.

RDAA's Pre-Budget Submission outlines a suite of practical, evidence-based measures to strengthen the rural medical workforce pipeline by improving workforce supply, training capacity, and retention across all the medical specialities, while supporting team-based models of care that reduce burnout and improve patient outcomes.

RDAA President Dr Sarah Chalmers said rural and remote health services depend heavily on rural general practitioners, rural generalists and small multidisciplinary teams, and that sustained investment is critical to maintaining access to safe, high-quality care.

"Rural and remote communities rely on a highly skilled but relatively small medical workforce that provides care across general practice, hospitals, emergency departments and advanced skill settings," Dr Chalmers said.

"Targeted investment now will help communities continue to receive care as close to home as possible.

"A key priority in the submission is embedding Rural Generalist medicine into the Australian health system through formal recognition in the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), aligning funding mechanisms with the recently achieved recognition of Rural Generalism as a recognised specialty by the Australian Medical Council."

RDAA is also calling for continuation of existing Rural Generalist workforce supports, including funding for state-based Rural Generalist Coordination Units and the Workforce Incentive Program – Rural Advanced Skills, which underpin recruitment, training and retention in rural areas.

To strengthen the future workforce RDAA recommends expanding prevocational training opportunities and permanently increasing Rural Generalist training positions, responding to strong and growing interest in rural careers among junior doctors.



The submission also highlights the need to better support GP supervisors, expand workforce incentives to include non-GP specialists working in rural communities, and invest in digital, infrastructure and housing solutions that enable multidisciplinary teams to grow and thrive in regional areas.

“These are not abstract policy ideas,” **Dr Chalmers said.**

“Our proposal builds on the strong growth in interest in rural generalist medicine with practical investments that will deliver real returns; improved access, reduced burnout, stronger teams and better health outcomes for rural and remote Australians.”

RDAA said the 2026–27 Budget represents an important opportunity to consolidate recent workforce gains and ensure rural and remote communities are not left behind as broader health system reforms continue.

Download:

[Photo of Dr Sarah Chalmers](#)
[RDAA Pre-Budget Submission](#)

Available for interview:

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