

# Media Release

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## **Rural health inquiry highlights desperate need for more funding, AMA (NSW) says**

The AMA (NSW) has welcomed the final report from the NSW parliamentary inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional, and remote New South Wales, but says achieving the report's recommendations will not be feasible unless Governments make a meaningful funding commitment to improving health.

"The report underscores the paucity of investment made into rural health to date and the absolute necessity to rethink current funding arrangements," said AMA (NSW) President, Dr Danielle McMullen.

"The AMA is calling on the Commonwealth to increase its share of funding to NSW from 45% to 50%, and for the State to commit to investing the 'freed up' funds into health.

"Without change to the current funding arrangements and a significant commitment between the State and Commonwealth Governments to work cooperatively to improve rural health, it will be difficult to achieve many of the recommendations outlined by the Committee," Dr McMullen said.

"The inquiry also highlights the hardworking doctors in rural NSW, who are committed to their communities and passionate about providing the best care possible. But without support, they can't meet the growing health needs of their communities," Dr McMullen said.

"The inquiry caused considerable distress to those working in rural and regional NSW and the focus now needs to be on ensuring that some positives come from this process."

AMA (NSW) was pleased by the report's focus on recruitment and retention of GP and non-GP specialists, as well as education and training.

“The AMA has been urging the State Government to look at incentives, contract flexibility, and the provision of adequate health infrastructure to attract more doctors into rural and regional NSW,” Dr McMullen said.

The Committee’s acknowledgement and support of the GP Single Employer Model was also a positive finding that has the potential to address the decline of doctors-in-training taking up GP training.

“A focus on reforming primary care is necessary and initiatives such as the GP Single Employer Model provide GP registrars with comparable remuneration and entitlements to hospital-based colleagues, making general practice a more attractive option to doctors-in-training,” Dr McMullen said.

The Committee report follows the Federal Government’s recent announcement of funding into rural health and practical policies.

The AMA has welcomed the election focus on rural health, but said more work is needed, particularly around rural hospital funding, the National Rural Generalist Pathway, equitable terms and conditions for GP registrars and bolstering non-GP specialist training.

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