

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 15 September 2023

AMA summit to address Australia's rural medical workforce dilemma

The Australian Medical Association will bring together leading doctors and experts in rural medicine to unearth much needed solutions to some of the most pressing issues affecting Australia's regional medical workforce.

In response to crippling rural workforce shortages and a lack of specialist training opportunities throughout regional Australia, the AMA will hold a Rural Medical Training Summit in Canberra today.

The event will coincide with the launch of the [*AMA's Plan for improving access to rural general practice*](#), which proposes a range of measures to improve access to primary healthcare for rural communities.

Proposed measures outlined in the plan include the establishment of a National Rural Health and Workforce Strategy — with funding for an independent workforce planning agency — and expanded training pathways for doctors in rural areas.

The Rural Medical Training Summit will help the AMA and other key health stakeholders develop priorities for advocacy and reform in rural specialist training.

AMA President Professor Stephen Robson said the expertise of participants, including one of the world's foremost authorities in rural medical education — Professor Roger Strasser AM — would be a key part of collaborative efforts in rural medical training reform.

"Medical workforce shortages are among the biggest threats to rural health in Australia," Professor Robson said.

"There is a severe lack of specialist training options for medical graduates in rural areas, meaning they are forced to return to the cities, where there are far more doctors per capita than in rural areas.

"The maldistribution of Australia's medical workforce is not something that can be fixed overnight, but collaborative initiatives like the AMA's Rural Medical Training Summit can help form real, long-term fixes, rather than band-aid solutions such as only increasing the number of medical graduates."

Professor Robson said Australia already produced medical graduates at a rate higher than the OECD average, but there remained limited opportunities for graduates to undergo specialist training in rural areas.

He said the summit would examine how to address this issue, as well as ways to reform outdated policies to adapt to a more modern, flexible, and transient workforce.

The summit will also showcase the many rich and rewarding experiences of training in rural and regional Australia and discuss the need for extra support measures for those who work in those areas of the country.

The all-day event will be split into several sessions focusing on various policy issues including incentivising rural practice, creating training places in rural centres, supporting international medical graduates and thriving in rural practice.

Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 media@ama.com.au

 [@ama_media](#)

 [@amapresident](#)

 [@medicalassociation_au](#)

 [AustralianMedicalAssociation](#)

 [@medicalassociation_au](#)