

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Medical Colleges Join Forces to Tackle Rural Doctor Crisis**

**New initiative prioritises rural-trained doctors for specialist training positions**

18 June 2025 – Australia's specialist medical colleges are implementing groundbreaking changes to their training selection processes to address the chronic shortage of specialist doctors in rural and remote communities.

The Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC), working with the National Rural Health Commissioner, has released new guidelines requiring all specialist medical colleges to prioritise candidates with rural backgrounds and experience when selecting new trainees.

"Too many rural Australians are waiting too long for specialist care, or having to travel hundreds of kilometres to access it," said Associate Professor Sanjay Jeganathan, Chair of CPMC. "We know that doctors who come from rural areas or have trained in rural settings are far more likely to return and practice in these communities."

Under the new framework, medical colleges will systematically recognise and reward rural experience when selecting new specialist trainees.

The initiative establishes standardised criteria recognising candidates who spent significant childhood years in rural areas, medical students who completed 12+ months of rural placements, and junior doctors who gained experience in rural hospitals.

"The initiative from the Colleges to apply practical strategies to improve medical workforce distribution to rural and remote communities by recognising the predictors of rural practice in selection processes – being rural origin and positive rural experience prior to training – is welcome," said Professor Jenny May, National Rural Health Commissioner.

The new approach represents unprecedented coordination across Australia's specialist medical colleges.

"We're moving beyond good intentions to systematic change," said A/Prof Jeganathan. "Every college will now use consistent definitions and transparent processes that recognise the value of rural medical experience."

The initiative aligns with the National Medical Workforce Strategy and will be implemented progressively across all specialist medical colleges.

"This is about ensuring every Australian, regardless of their postcode, can access high-quality specialist medical care in their own community," said A/Prof Jeganathan.

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