

TRANSCRIPT

TUE 29 JULY 2025

Transcript: AMA Queensland President, Dr Nick Yim, 4BC Radio, Breakfast with Peter Fegan, Tuesday 29 July 2025

Subjects: Workforce Working Group Action Plan

PETER FEGAN: Well, doctors have had their say. A peak body of Queensland physicians have, for the last six months, put together a brief and dropped it on the minister's desk. The brief details what medical professionals believe will retain and attract doctors in Queensland. The reality is there is a shortage and it affects you and I. There are six key areas doctors have highlighted. They want to create an ecosystem in which doctors work and it must be fit for purpose for the needs of patients and doctors into the future. That's pretty smart, right?

The next one was the role of the doctor, how it was and how it is now and what it needs to become to continue delivering the healthcare patients deserve. So they'll examine doctors. Medical training pipeline, that's another great idea. General practice being the backbone of our health system. For far too long now, people, when they have an issue with their health, they tend to go to a hospital instead of a GP. So this is great. General practice will be the backbone of our health system. I couldn't agree more.

Public hospitals that provide Queenslanders with life-saving tertiary services and essential training grounds for our medical graduates. So that means doctors or physicians finish university, they can go straight into our hospitals. Great idea. Private hospitals that ensure patients and doctors have healthcare and workplace choice and encourage innovation. I love this. Dr Nick Yim from the AMAQ says doctors have been calling for some of the solutions for years. Things like a national health workforce, planning agencies and training numbers and community needs. So that's training people for where doctors need to go. And I'm pleased to say Dr Nick Yim joins me on the line. Doc, good morning.

DR NICK YIM: Good morning Peter.

PETER FEGAN: Mate, it's great to have your company this morning. I've got to say, this is quite smart and it's quite detailed. And I really do like the point you've made here: general practice being the backbone of our health system. That's a great call.

DR NICK YIM: Absolutely. I'm really proud of the work of AMA Queensland. Obviously, it's the team behind it that worked this up over the past six months. We know that over the past couple of years, our healthcare system has been under pressure, the Queensland perspective, but also from a national perspective, which is the reason why this workforce plan is so important, because there are multiple steps and we acknowledge that it's not going to be overnight fix. We have a plan moving to the future so we can keep delivering the good care to Queenslanders and our patients, our community, and which is the reason why we have to speak about these six priorities here. Obviously, you alluded to the health system. It's changed over the past 50 years, it's changed over the past 10 years, which is the reason why we do need to adapt. And the training is so important. More and more patients, unfortunately, they're

waiting extended periods of time both in the public and private sectors. So that means there's an imbalance or a disconnect between the number of training positions available to the number of specialties that's required. So that's the reason why we need a workforce plan and a training plan to ensure that pipeline is still open.

PETER FEGAN: Can you just share with us, Doc, how bad things currently are? And if we continue on this trajectory, where are we going to end up?

DR NICK YIM: This is one of the great challenges. We know that currently patients are waiting longer periods of time to get into their doctors, outpatient appointments, their surgeries. I'm hoping and I'm optimistic that we are turning the corner and we are engaging with the state government, which is the reason why we've delivered this plan to Minister Nicholls, so we can work together to work on strategies that can fix the issues from a long-term perspective. We don't want a short-term fix. We want a long-term fix.

PETER FEGAN: Are we seeing less young people choosing medicine after school? Like, are we seeing their preferences.

DR NICK YIM: It's still very competitive to enter medicine, which is the reason why we're having more medical students come into the system. But we know that, unfortunately, less people are entering general practice, and as we've alluded to, general practice is the backbone of preventive health. If we can keep people well, we can keep people out of the hospital system needing those more expensive, more surgical cares and such down the track.

PETER FEGAN: My guest this morning is Dr Nick Yim. He's the president of the AMAQ. If you're just tuning in, Dr Nick Yim and a group of other physicians have just dropped a report on the desk of Health Minister Tim Nicholls. It's a report that they've been gathering for the last six months. And inside it has six key factors that these doctors believe will help the shortage of doctors in Queensland. Now, here's a big issue, Dr Nick Yim, and it's doctors in the bush. And I'm surprised that one of your demands wasn't offering more incentive for young doctors to head to the bush. Perhaps the government needs to offer higher salaries for bush docs.

DR NICK YIM: It's not just one thing. It's not just about the money. Obviously, there are elements of incentives and that could be housing, it could be jobs for their spouses, schooling. There's many, factors and time and time again, when we spoke to the clinicians who were part of this report, it wasn't just about financial reasons. We need to ensure that there is support available to minimise that burnout. They want to have access to their leave. They want to have access to time away from those clinical hours, the burnouts, and at the same time, you need those subspecialty supports. The benefit of being in Brisbane, if we need a neurosurgeon, if we need a cardiothoracic surgeon, it's there. They'll have access. But unfortunately, if you're in Chinchilla, if you're in Weipa, you just can't access it.

PETER FEGAN: To be successful, Doc, I mean, and I think the younger generation, Gen Z in particular, need to learn this. To be successful, you need to be out of your comfort zone. Why not this? You talk about a lack of training facilities. How about this? If the government comes to the table and says we'll build you two new training facilities, should the AMAQ and the doctors turn around and say, righto,

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okay, if that's the case, we want one in Toowoomba or Rockhampton or Chinchilla, somewhere in the bush, that these younger doctors can start getting used to life in rural areas?

DR NICK YIM: 100%. So we know that when doctors are training in the regional rural areas, and even if they stay for a couple of years, when they come back to those metropolitan areas, they have an insight of what life is like in those regional rural areas so they can work together.

PETER FEGAN: It gives them a taste of it, you know. I mean, the problem is, Doc, and this is a broader issue, is Gen Z have never travelled. They've never gone out into the bush. They have no interest in it. You know, when I was growing up, when I was a bit younger, we loved going out to the bush. We loved travelling. And when I joined the mining industry after I finished school, all I did was travel around Queensland and parts of rural New South Wales. And there are some beautiful little towns out there. It's just a matter of getting them there. So perhaps that is the answer. You know, when we get a new training facility, let's whack it in the bush.

DR NICK YIM: And that's where it comes out, that workforce analysis, the needs assessment, where do we need these training facilities and how we can get them out there. We know that carrots are better than sticks and these are things that we want to discuss with the government.

PETER FEGAN: All right Doc, give us an update once you get a response from Tim Nicholls.

DR NICK YIM: Absolutely, thanks Peter.

Contact: AMA Queensland Media: +61 419 735 641

media@amaq.com.au