

MEDIA RELEASE

Tues, 29 July 2025

Prac payments must be extended to medical students to bolster rural workforce

The Australian Medical Association has written to independent MP Dr Monique Ryan welcoming her draft amendment to HELP debt legislation to extend prac payments medical students, a proposal the AMA has previously raised with the federal government.

Australian medical students are currently required to undertake 2000 hours of unpaid clinical placements, often in rural and regional settings while incurring a significant financial burden.

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said in the face of ongoing workforce shortages it was simply “odd” that medical students were not eligible for prac payments while students from other disciplines receive financial support for their mandatory placements.

“It really is odd to exclude our medical students from the same financial help other students receive while expecting them to undertake practical placements, often in rural, regional and remote areas,” Dr McMullen said.

“I [wrote to the Education Minister last year](#) to extend the scheme to medical students, especially as we are struggling to fill rural and regional healthcare positions.

“We again urge the government to get on board and support Dr Ryan’s amendment which would remove the inequity faced by medical students and removing disincentives to get our medical students out bush.”

The [current inequity in healthcare outcomes for rural and remote patients](#) was highlighted by the AMA earlier this year.

Dr McMullen said the “evidence also tells us that medical students that practice in a rural and regional area are more likely to stay in a rural and regional areas. Helping these students stay and undertake their practice in rural and remote communities will mean more doctors in areas that struggle the most with access.”

“Helping students have a well-supported experience of rural medicine is vital to entice students to pursue a career in rural practice and in other underserved communities,” she said.

“Dr Ryan’s amendment is supported by hundreds of thousands of Australians, with more than 290,000 signatures on her petition in favour of helping support our rural communities with this amendment.”

“Removing the unfair financial exclusion of medical students can make a real difference to our future medical workforce and we encourage the government to get on board as part of efforts to improve rural access to medical services.”

The Commonwealth prac payment scheme — announced in the 2024–25 federal budget — provides means tested support to nursing and midwifery students undertaking mandatory placements.

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