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**AMA CALLS ON COAG TO URGENTLY DEVELOP A NATIONAL  
 MEDICAL WORKFORCE STRATEGY**

*Report of the AMA Medical Workforce and Training Summit 2018*

The AMA is calling on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to urgently commission a National Medical Workforce Strategy to address significant workforce challenges and implement long-term workforce planning to better meet Australia’s future health care needs.

The call is based on one of the key recommendations of the outcomes report, released today, of the AMA Medical Workforce and Training Summit, which was held in March this year.

The Summit brought together more than 80 leading stakeholders to discuss priority medical workforce challenges including the maldistribution of the medical workforce, workforce shortages in some specialty areas, and the lack of prevocational and specialist training places for medical graduates once they have left medical school.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said the Summit was all about providing solutions to the current and emerging threats to producing a medical workforce with the right skills in the right numbers to serve Australia’s growing population, including the needs of rural and regional Australia.

Dr Gannon said the comprehensive report from the Summit identifies a range of potential policy priority areas that were strongly supported by delegates from across the spectrum of medical workforce and medical training.

“We are providing all our governments with solutions,” Dr Gannon said.

“We now need to see the Commonwealth and the States and Territories cooperate more closely in planning and coordinating our future medical workforce.

“While the Commonwealth is responsible for funding medical schools and general practice training, and has programs to support medical training in community and private settings, the majority of medical training still takes place in State and Territory public hospitals.

“No single level of government can solve current medical workforce challenges on its own. Unless we have greater genuine cooperation between jurisdictions, the challenges and problems will remain unresolved.”

Dr Gannon said it has been 14 years since the last national health workforce strategy - the *National Health Workforce Strategic Framework* - was released.

“Our governments cannot continue to work in isolation of each other on this vital issue,” Dr Gannon said.

“There is a lot of effort going into medical workforce planning and coordination at different levels of government, but none of this work is joined up - and the objectives are often different.

“A National Medical Workforce Strategy, developed with strong input from the profession, is critical to getting all stakeholders on the same page to achieve policies that will deliver the future medical workforce that the community needs.

“Australia does not need any more medical school places. We have seen record growth in medical student numbers, well above the OECD average.

“The former Health Workforce Australia projected a potential medical workforce oversupply in the years ahead.

“The Summit participants clearly recognised that the focus needs to shift away from increasing medical school places towards giving medical students more opportunities to train in rural areas.

“We need to deliver postgraduate training places in the areas and specialties where they are most needed.”

The Summit highlighted a number of other key areas for action including:

- the need to better support generalism;
- a focus on matching training with community need;
- more opportunities for specialist training in rural areas;
- the development of a strong rural training pathway;
- supporting careers in undersupplied specialties; and
- the establishment of the National Rural Generalist Pathway.

Dr Gannon said the mood of the Summit was very positive and productive, and there was plenty of unity of purpose.

“I was pleased to see that many of the ideas that emerged align closely with existing AMA policy,” Dr Gannon said.

“We now need smarter policy than we have seen from governments in the past, and COAG is key to setting united future planning.

“Simplistic ideas like the opening of a new medical school or the importation of more doctors from overseas are not the solution to our long-term medical workforce requirements.

“This mindset is driven by short-term political gain, rather than the long-term health needs of our communities.”

The AMA will use the Summit report to inform future AMA policy development, including an upcoming review of the *AMA Position Statement on Medical Workforce and Training*.

The Summit report is at <https://ama.com.au/medical-workforce-training-summit>

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