



STRONGER RURAL HEALTH STRATEGY

The Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network

The Stronger Rural Health Strategy's Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network establishes five rurally based university medical school programs in the Murray-Darling region of New South Wales and Victoria. The new schools will enable medical students to stay in their communities while they study and train to become a doctor, increasing their likelihood of staying and working in rural areas. The network will provide an end-to-end approach to rural training to improve the future distribution of the medical workforce.

Investment

An investment of \$95.4 million over four years will be provided to set up the *train in the regions, stay in the regions* program which includes the new Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network.

Locations

The network will include:

- University of NSW (Wagga Wagga)
- University of Sydney (Dubbo)
- Charles Sturt University in partnership with Western Sydney University (Orange)
- Monash University (Bendigo, Mildura)
- University of Melbourne (Shepparton)
 - with a pathway for undergraduate students from La Trobe University (Bendigo and Wodonga).

The network will provide students with the option of studying and training in more than 20 regional and rural communities.

Training in rural areas

The network will enable medical students and graduates to undertake the majority of their study and training in the Murray-Darling region, reducing the need for them to move to metropolitan areas.

Evidence shows that enrolling students from a rural background and having students undertake long-term rural training increases the likelihood of rural practice.

The establishment of the network means that local students will be able to study and train to become a doctor, and provide supervised medical services to rural patients.

Investment in rural areas

The Murray-Darling region, with large rural centres, has potential for expansion in medical training given patient population, infrastructure and clinical training.

The bulk of the network funding is for investment in infrastructure for new or expanded teaching facilities and extra student accommodation across a series of universities and main sites in the Murray-Darling region.

Rural hospitals will also benefit through increased staffing and workforce sustainability.

Commonwealth Supported Places

There are no new medical Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) established – the focus is on distribution and creating an end-to-end training continuum in the Murray-Darling region. The network will reallocate a small number of existing CSPs in a managed process, with first medical student intakes from 2021.

A pool of medical CSPs, drawn from existing allocations, will be established to provide the Government with the flexibility to address health workforce priorities as they arise over time. The Department of Education and Training will undertake consultations with universities to inform how the redistribution process will work. The Department of Health and the Department of Education and Training will work together on implementing measures to support better management of medical graduate supply.

Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training

The network will build on the Australian Government's existing investment in rural undergraduate training through the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program.

In addition to the Network, *the train in the regions, stay in the regions* program includes two new participants in the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program from 2019:

- Curtin University will be funded for rural clinical school activities for medical students, supporting students to undertake short and long term clinical training placements in rural Western Australia.
- La Trobe University will be funded to establish a new University Department of Rural Health to increase clinical training opportunities for nursing and allied health students in rural Victoria.

Further information

Updates on progress of the reform and further information:

- Department of Health's website www.health.gov.au
- Department of Education and Training's website www.education.gov.au