

13 February 2024

Rural doctors get face to face with Federal Pollies

Senior leadership of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) are in Canberra this week to present to and meet with Federal Politicians to talk about how to get more doctors into rural Australia.

RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski, and Immediate Past President, Dr Megan Belot, along with CEO Peta Rutherford, are meeting with top decision-makers from all sides of the House.

Also this week RDAA will be hosting an event for politicians, their advisors and other key industry leaders to present their Pre-Budget Submission and additional insights on the best way forward for a sustainable rural medical workforce.

“Rural medicine is an exciting and varied speciality, and often people just don’t know what lifestyle and professional satisfaction is on offer when you choose it,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“We know that getting more junior doctors into quality rural placements is one of the best ways of giving them the experience to help inform decisions about their future. Many junior doctors who have not considered a career in rural medicine do so after completing a rural rotation.



“We need to get more of these trainee doctors into the bush. To do this we need to increase our supervision capacity and we need to increase the availability of funded rotations. We will be detailing our suggestions to address this aspect.

“When recruiting new health professionals, and other professionals like teachers and police, community infrastructure, such as the accessibility of childcare, can be a key factor. We are proposing an innovative pilot program to address this problem that we hope the Albanese Government will support.

“There is a virtual labyrinth of Commonwealth funding and incentives available for different roles in different rural communities. At our members’ request RDAA has developed a calculator, which will be available by the end of the month, that combines all of these different streams into one place, so that doctors can gain an actual understanding of what their remuneration will be.

“We would like to expand this to include State-based incentives, and are seeking a small amount of funding to support this development, plus assistance in keeping the calculator current as changes are made to these programs,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“There are some really positive initiatives underway in the rural medical space at the moment with the Single Employer Model pilots, and also Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine’s

(ACRRM's) Rural Generalist Training Scheme trainee intake being heavily oversubscribed for its 2024 intake, we strongly urge the Government to double down on their investment in these areas to allow rural to thrive with a level excitement that has not been seen the last few years.

"We look forward to presenting these ideas in-person to both Minister for Health, Hon. Mark Butler and Assistant Minister for Regional and Rural Health, Emma McBride.

"Minister McBride will be attending our event and making an address, and Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional and Rural Health, Dr Anne Webster, will also be attending.

"I am looking forward to outlining ways in which our processes can better support Overseas Trained Doctors (OTDs) to live and work in Australia. OTDs currently make up 40 per cent of all rural doctors and with current policy changes taking effect we will need to make it as easy as possible for rural practices to recruit and retain these doctors into roles in the bush.

"The event will provide a great opportunity for MPs, Senators, their advisors and key Departmental staff to discuss with the rural doctors attending from right around the country just what is needed to better support excellent medical care in rural communities, and how it can be done."

During the week, RDAA will also be meeting with Hon. David Littleproud Leader of the Nationals, Senator Anne Ruston Shadow Minister for Health, Senator Kristie McBain Minister for Regional Development, Blair Comley PSM, Secretary of the Department of Health, along with other key politicians and executives involved in rural health.

[RDAA's Pre-Budget Submission](#)

A high resolution photo of Dr RT Lewandowski is [available here](#).

Available for interview:

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