



THE HON WARREN SNOWDON MP

Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services

MEDIA RELEASE

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RUDD GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO TACKLE THE RURAL HEALTH CHALLENGE

People living in rural and remote Australia will benefit from significant improvements in the delivery of health, hospital and aged care services under the Rudd Government's health reforms.

Building a National Health and Hospitals Network will deliver better health and hospitals for rural Australians and their families.

By taking on 100 per cent funding and policy for primary care, the Australian Government will have the platform to reduce the fragmented care that is all too familiar to people trying to access the care they need.

The 2010-11 Budget also continues the Government's commitment to ensuring all Australians get the health care they need, when they need it, regardless of where they live.

Enhancing the rural health workforce

The Government is committed to building the critical workforce needed to deliver essential health services in rural and regional Australia.

The Government is investing \$639.0 million to deliver:

- 5,500 new GPs or GPs undergoing training in the next decade of which 50 per cent will be in rural and regional Australia (\$344.9 million);
- 975 places each year by 2013 for junior doctors to experience a career in general practice before they become a fully fledged doctor, with placements in rural and regional areas a priority (\$149.6 million); and
- 680 more specialist doctors in the next decade with the delivery of training in rural and regional areas a priority (\$144.5 million).

The Government also recognises that keeping nurses in rural and remote areas is critical. The Government is investing:

- \$28.8 million into a rural locum scheme to give around 3,000 nurses in rural areas time to take leave and attend continuing professional development;

- \$390.3 million to support an expanded and more flexible role for nurses in general practice, particularly in chronic disease management and prevention; and
- incentive payments of \$25,000 for a registered nurse and \$12,500 for an enrolled nurse will be made available for eligible general practices (capped at five incentives).

To address the shortage of allied health professionals in rural Australia, the Government will provide:

- 400 more clinical training scholarships over four years for allied health students in rural and remote areas (up to \$11,000 each) at a cost of \$6.5 million; and
- a new \$5.3 million rural locum scheme to support around 400 allied health locum placements over four years.

Bolstering rural aged care

This Budget continues the Government's commitment to older Australians. The 2010-11 Budget provides:

- capital funding of \$120 million for 286 sub-acute beds or their equivalent in rural and remote Multi-Purpose Services (MPS), allowing long stay older patients in hospital beds to be discharged to more appropriate care settings;
- up to an additional 300 aged care places in Multi-Purpose Services by allowing these services to be established in larger communities of up to 6,000 people; and
- \$10.1 million to increase the viability supplement payment for community aged care providers, giving a much-needed boost to community aged care services in rural and remote areas.

Addressing areas of special need

- The Government will provide an additional \$5.0 million to assist Australians living in rural and remote areas who have difficulty in accessing ophthalmology services, including cataract surgery. Eye teams managed through the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP) will be sent to regions in need.
- The Government is providing \$5.5 million for a 12 month extension of the Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities initiative. Many of these people and communities need ongoing support and mental health assistance to help them cope with the drought's devastating impact.

For all media inquiries, please contact Alice Plate on 0400 045 999