



THE HON MARK COULTON MP

Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government

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President of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine

MEDIA RELEASE

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New doctor training scheme to boost bush GP numbers by 400

Up to 400 general practitioners will train to work in regional Australia over the next four years, with the establishment today of the Coalition Government's *Rural Generalist Training Scheme* (RGTS) to boost doctor numbers in the bush.

The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) will deliver the Government-funded \$49.7 million program, with ACRRM providing up to 100 Rural Generalist GP training places each year.

Federal Regional Health Minister, Mark Coultou said the end goal of the RGTS is for patients to have increased access to primary health services in rural and remote communities.

"Rural and remote communities want safe and high quality primary healthcare services delivered by well-trained GPs with training in an extended rural skill set," Minister Coultou said.

"Our Government is committed to making this happen by continuing to build the rural medical training pipeline.

"I want to acknowledge ACRRM's hard work over the past twelve months to bring this program to fruition for aspiring rural generalists.

"By providing more rural training places, we will open more GPs' eyes to the significant benefits of being a rural generalist and living in a regional community."

Minister Coultou said rural generalist GPs are critical to the delivery of healthcare in rural and remote communities, and their specialist skills and training allow them to provide medical care in a wider range of circumstances.

ACRRM President, Dr Sarah Chalmers said the college is proud to be the provider of these specific rural and remote training placements.

"As the only medical college in Australia that exclusively trains doctors specifically to work in these locations, ACRRM is well placed to deliver a high quality, context-based program that will actively work towards correcting the maldistribution of doctors into rural and remote locations," Dr Chalmers said.

"A career in rural and remote medicine is rewarding and exciting and the college has been training rural generalists for more than 20 years.

"We have a world-class, internationally recognised program that trains for general practice, emergency care and advanced training that incorporates other specialty skills to contribute to overall healthcare in these locations.

“We are champing at the bit to increase the number of training places, and continue to improve the health of rural and remote Australians.”

Minister Coulton said solving rural doctor shortages in the bush is complex and requires a multifaceted approach.

“The Coalition Government has a strong record of delivering rural health program and reforms that benefit rural communities, the rural workforce and training pipeline and we are always looking to improve our rural health policy settings,” Minister Coulton said.

“To have a lasting impact and create sustainable health care services in our rural communities, we need governments, the rural health sector and regional communities working together to establish the right mix of short, medium and long-term programs and incentives.”

The initial intake of 60 registrars will begin training by the second half of this year. The funding for the RGTS was announced in the 2018–2019 Budget as part of a measure to encourage GPs to areas where they were needed.

It also supports the development of the *National Rural Generalist Pathway*, which is a central element of the Australian Government’s *Stronger Rural Health Strategy*. The Pathway attracts, trains and retains highly skilled rural generalists in areas outside of the cities.

The Australian Government also supports rural generalist GP training through the Australian General Practice Training Program.

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