

# **PRIME MINISTER**

## **MINISTER FOR HEALTH**

### **MINISTER FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH**

#### **BOOST FOR ALLIED HEALTH IN RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA**

The Rudd Government will double scholarships for allied health clinical placements in rural areas and establish a locum scheme to support 1,000 allied health workers over the next decade.

These investments are part of the Rudd Government's plans to reform our health system to deliver better health and better hospitals for all Australians.

Currently, there aren't enough allied health professionals in rural and remote areas. Allied health practitioners include physiotherapists, dieticians, occupational therapists and optometrists.

In major cities there are 354 allied health professionals per 100,000 people but only 64 workers per 100,000 people in very remote areas of Australia.

To improve retention of allied health professionals in rural areas, and provide opportunities for those interested in working the bush, the Government will:

- Double the number of scholarships available for allied health students to undertake a clinical placement in a rural area from 100 to 200 each year - providing 1,000 extra scholarships for allied health students over the next decade.
- Provide 100 allied health locum placements per year, supporting 1,000 allied health workers over the next decade.

The Allied Health Clinical Placement Scholarship Scheme, an election commitment of the Rudd Government, has been extremely popular with allied health students seeking to undertake some of their training in the bush.

Some 875 applications have been received for the 187 scholarships offered to date.

We know that health professionals who spend time training and learning in regional and rural centres often establish strong links with the local community.

The Government will also invest to make locum arrangements - which already exist for doctors - available to allied health professionals for the first time.

The Government will invest \$11.8 million over the forward estimates to provide this additional support to allied health professionals in rural and remote Australia.

Allied health professionals working in Cairns will be eligible to apply for these schemes.

The Rudd Government is determined to attract more doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to regional and rural communities throughout Australia – and keep them there.

This will mean more Australians will get better access in the future to appropriate health care, regardless of their location.

This investment will build on the Government's:

- \$632 million announcement to train more doctors – of which 50 per cent of new GP training places will be provided in the bush.
- \$134 million Rural Health Workforce Strategy, that will deliver 500 communities and 2,400 doctors with more financial support to move and stay in rural and remote areas.

## **CAIRNS**

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