

MEDIA STATEMENT
9 May 2018



Our response to the Federal Budget

The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN) has welcomed the Australian Government's Budget that supports rural communities with funding to improve rural health.

The 2018-19 Budget addresses all three of the NRHSN's 2018 key advocacy areas – Rural Pathways, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Mental Health - with the \$550 million *Stronger Rural Health Strategy*. This is a multifaceted model that aims to improve health care for those living and working in rural and remote Australia and reflects recommendations that the NRHSN and many of our stakeholders have put forward.

The NRHSN is pleased to see that 3,000 primary health care nurses and hundreds of allied health workers are planned for rural Australia. This initiative aligns with the NRHSN Nurse Practitioner Position paper, which advocates for strengthening the role of nursing and allied health professionals to create a stronger rural health workforce.

The Government has announced it will establish a Murray Darling Medical School Network to retain doctors in rural locations. The NRHSN supports this approach to providing end-to-end rural training for medical students, and encourages a more national approach to rural training places located outside of New South Wales and Victoria. The additional 100 Rural Generalist training positions to be created by 2021 demonstrates the Government's commitment to the National Rural Generalist Pathway currently being developed.

The NRHSN has been a long-time advocate for improvements to the Bonded Medical Places Scheme (BMPS) and supports the positive changes to BMPS announced in the Budget. The Government's changes will allow for a more standardised approach and increased support for those students who hold a BMPS contract. The BMPS will evolve to provide better support to students and doctors to improve retention and encourage doctors to remain practicing in rural Australia.

The NRHSN welcomes the Government's promise to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professional Organisations through priorities around mentoring, strengthening cultural safety and supporting students. This Budget commitment strongly aligns with the NRHSN Indigenous Health Position Paper published in 2017.

The NRHSN believes that the *Stronger Rural Health Strategy* to be delivered as part of the Government's 2018-19 Budget is a positive step in supporting the next generation of health professionals and improving the health of rural Australians.

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*The **National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN)** is Australia's only multi-disciplinary student health network, bringing together people studying medicine, nursing and allied health, encouraging them to pursue rural health careers. With more than 9,000 members who belong to 28 Rural Health Clubs at universities throughout the nation, the NRHSN provides a voice for students who are passionate about improving health outcomes for rural and remote Australians.*