

MEDIA RELEASE



Embargoed for first editions / bulletins, Tuesday 10 August 2010
(Embargoed interviews also available Monday)

Low cost rural doctor training should be a 'no brainer' for Labor

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) says federal Labor would be 'extremely foolish' not to unveil a National Rural Generalist Training Pathway at its official campaign launch next Monday, given the Pathway would deliver many more well-trained doctors to rural Australia at virtually no additional cost.

"This really is no brainer stuff" RDAA President, Dr Nola Maxfield, said.

"Our proposed National Rural Generalist Training Pathway builds on Queensland's Rural Training Pathway which has been highly successful in delivering committed doctors to rural communities across the state.

"Many of these communities thought they would never see another local doctor in their town again, not to mention the survival of their local hospital.

"Rural generalists are able to provide both general practice-based care and hospital-based care, and have undertaken advanced training in areas like obstetrics, anaesthetics, emergency medicine, general surgery, Indigenous health and acute mental healthcare.

"This means they are confident and competent at treating the many conditions and injuries that will come their way as a rural generalist doctor.

"Under RDAA's proposal for a national Pathway, young doctors would enter a dedicated five year training pathway via *existing* places in the Australian General Practice Training program and the junior doctor training and procedural training programs provided by the state governments...this means that virtually no additional investment in training places would be required on the part of the Federal Government.

"At the end of the day, this is all about bringing the pieces of the rural doctor training puzzle together. All the pieces are there, they just haven't been brought together in a co-ordinated and coherent national pathway before.

"This is certainly something that a number of states and territories are interested in doing, and a number of them have been actively considering the adoption of the Queensland pathway in their own jurisdictions.

"In an encouraging sign, the Federal Government engaged a consultant earlier this year to review the Queensland model. We particularly commend Federal Health Minister, Nicola Roxon MP, for her willingness to look closely at how a national Pathway could combat the critical national shortage of rural generalists.

"The Federal Minister for Rural and Regional Health, Warren Snowdon MP, also seemed very supportive of a national expansion of the Pathway when we met with him recently to discuss its success in Queensland.

"But now it's time to act.

"Next Monday's campaign launch provides the ideal platform for Labor to announce that it will introduce a National Rural Generalist Training Pathway...and prove that it is not only interested in marginal outer-suburban electorates, but also the needs of those living in the bush."

Available for interview: Dr Nola Maxfield on 0418 335 344 and RDAA CEO, Steve Sant, on 0419 770 010. Rural Doctors Association representatives from most states are also available for interview—phone Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890 for contact details.