



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Rural Doctor Shortage: More of the Same Not Good Enough

Newly elected Centroc Chair, Cr Keith, expressed concern today about the performance of medical schools in recruiting rural students, and the continuing low numbers of Australian medical graduates moving into rural practice.

At its meeting in Grenfell yesterday, Centroc discussed the state of the rural medical workforce and Charles Sturt University's proposal to establish a dedicated regional medical school to address rural doctor shortages.

"All the evidence shows that a rural doctor is significantly more likely to have come from a rural area, and have done their training in a rural area" said Cr Keith.

"Data from the independent Graduate Destination Survey shows that more than 70 per cent of Charles Sturt University's on-campus health students are from a rural or regional area, and more than 80 per cent of these go on to work in rural and regional areas after graduation.

"By comparison, the latest available data shows that fewer than 20 per cent of all medical students enrolled in metropolitan medical schools are from rural areas, and at some very prestigious medical schools this figure drops to as low as 7 and 13 per cent.

"A big concern for our communities is the very low numbers of Australian medical graduates that are moving into rural practice, which is less than 10 per cent for two of Australia's biggest metropolitan medical schools.

"Our communities are rightly concerned about future access to health and medical services if the performance of current medical schools does not improve.

"Health Workforce Australia recently concluded that metropolitan-run rural medical programs will not deliver workforce equity for rural and regional communities. This sends alarm bells throughout rural and regional Australia.

“More of the same is not good enough. It is time for metropolitan medical schools to prove that they are meeting their rural recruitment targets, and that they are delivering increasing proportions of their Australian medical graduates into rural practice.

“Charles Sturt University has an established track record of recruiting rural students, and delivering highly skilled health professionals into rural and regional practice. It is time that a medical school at Charles Sturt is incorporated into the mix of strategies to address the rural doctor shortage.

“Centroc members will write to the Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon Tanya Plibersek, reiterating their support for Charles Sturt University’s medical school proposal.

“We will also request that all new medical or clinical school proposals are assessed against a range of rural-specific criteria, and that local government and regional communities are directly consulted before any decision is made.

“Decisions about rural medical education should not be made without proper consultation with the elected representatives of rural and regional communities.

“The criteria should include a requirement for universities to provide independent evidence that they have a track record of recruiting rural students, and evidence to show a substantial proportion of their health or medical graduates locate to inland rural practice” said Cr Keith.

ENDS

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