



National Medical Workforce Strategy Consultation - 2020

National Medical Workforce Strategy

Australia can be proud of its medical workforce, which, through individual and collective action, plays a critical role in providing access to high-quality healthcare for almost 25 million Australians. Doctors provide services across diverse settings, which requires a breadth and depth of skills and understanding.

There are a number of reasons why a National Medical Workforce Strategy is important, and important now. Firstly, there is a powerful link between the medical workforce and the type and quality of services that the healthcare system can provide. Secondly, the medical workforce has evolved dramatically since the last National Health Strategic Framework was released in 2004, creating an imperative for a renewed collective approach to how our medical workforce is sustainably meeting the current and future needs of Australians. For example,

- The increase in medical student graduates was designed to, progress towards self-sufficiency and improve access to clinical care in rural locations, however regional and rural areas continue to rely on large numbers of international medical graduates and there is significant variability in the workforce supply for different specialties. The Commonwealth, states and territories, health services, specialist medical colleges, universities and other local planning bodies have worked tirelessly at workforce planning, however these planning activities are not always integrated collectively in a way that optimises the medical workforce at a national level.
- There has been a trend towards doctors developing subspecialised skillsets and moving away from generalist practice, reducing the flexibility in the medical workforce.
- There are ongoing issues related to doctor well-being and workplace-based culture, resulting in unfulfilling and at times, unsafe working conditions.

The demographics of the workforce, expectations of work life balance, demand for medical services and changes in the needs of the population all mean that the workforce must adapt to meet increased pressure and changing needs for skills and specialties.

The Commonwealth Department of Health is developing a National Medical Workforce Strategy (the Strategy) in collaboration with the Medical Workforce Reform Advisory Committee (MWRAC). MWRAC members include the states and territories, specialist medical colleges, and medical professional associations.

The Strategy is being developed to:

- Guide medical workforce planning activities at all levels of government;
- Match the supply of GPs and consultant specialists to the predicted medical service needs of the community; and
- Identify achievable actions to build a sustainable, skilled and flexible medical workforce.

Current status

Following consultation with the sector, a Scoping Framework was released and endorsed by Health Ministers in 2019. The Scoping Framework outlines the current context, case for change and identifies nine priority areas for the Strategy to focus on:

- **Coordination between medical workforce planners**
- **Over- and undersupply in certain specialties**
- **Reliance on registrars to meet health service needs**
- **Geographic maldistribution and inequality in healthcare access**
- **Balance of generalist versus subspecialist skills**
- **Management of end to end training and career pathways**
- **Doctor well-being, culture and leadership in the medical workforce**
- **Growing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and having a culturally safe workforce**
- **Service delivery and changing models of care**

The final three priority areas are cross cutting, and will be actively considered throughout all streams. For example, it is considered that improving the end to end training pathways and providing doctors more information with which to plan their careers will improve Doctor well-being.

Phase two of consultation occurred in late 2019, to identify potential solutions across the nine areas, noting the significant amount of crossover and linkages between the issues. Up to 50 potential solutions have been identified, and will be tested throughout the next phase of consultation during February and March 2020. In order to reach as many stakeholders as possible, McKinsey and Company and the Department will hold a series of forums and stakeholder engagement sessions in each State and Territory. In addition, question and answer webinar sessions will be held to ensure further opportunities to provide input are made available.

A pre-read document has been developed to provide more context, further detail and rationale for the currently drafted potential solutions. This will provide attendees at consultation an opportunity to think about the issues ahead of sessions, or for those who are unable to attend in person, provide feedback out of session.

The full pre-read is available on the Department's website [here](#).

Further information and updates on the progress of the Strategy will be available on the Department's website, at www.health.gov.au/workforce.