

The Price of Inequity: Medical Students excluded from Commonwealth Prac Payment Expansion

[23/07/2026]

The Australian Federal Government has announced the expansion of the Commonwealth Prac Payment to include 9 additional Allied Health degrees.

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) celebrates the win for our Allied Health colleagues, but is devastated and confused at the exclusion of medical students who complete the most rigorous placement hours, between 2000-4000.

Australia's medical system already has an inherent and insidious structural imbalance, medical workforce distribution massively undersupplies rural, remote, First Nations and low income communities.

Although medical schools recruit students from these areas, they are not supported to complete 2-4 years of full time, rigorous and unyielding placement. This has led to disastrous outcomes, such as an attrition rate of up to 45% for First Nations medical students.

Lack of workforce diversity in Australian healthcare is driving some of this nation's greatest failures. Health gaps are directly linked to diversity inequities in the medical workforce.

- **First Nations Health Inequity:** 7/10 First Nations people experience significant healthcare issues- correlated with an Indigenous health workforce density that is one third of the rate of non-Indigenous Australians.
- **Rural Health Gap** Life expectancy in rural and remote areas up to 7 years below the Australian average, associated with less than 5 times fewer specialist doctors than metropolitan regions.
- **Socioeconomic Class Health Gap:** 1 in 3 members of low income communities suffer from chronic health conditions, in comparison to 1 in 8 from affluent backgrounds.

Research is clear: people return to serve communities that are similar to the ones they were raised in.

For this government, one thing is clear, the fair go stops at the doors of medical school.

Without financial support, **Australians from the underserved and disadvantaged communities are condemned to shortened lives, chronic illness and suffering.**

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Key Facts & Statistics

- Rural students are **4 times more likely** to return to serve similar rural areas than their metropolitan counterparts.
- Australian medical students complete between **2000 to 4000 hours** of medical placement across **2-4 years**, the most of any healthcare degree in Australia.
- Universities recommend that medical students work no more than 5-10 hours per week.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students represent **4.2% of all medical students at entry, but only 2.3% at graduation.**
- **By 2048 Australia will have a deficit of 12,000 specialist doctors,** concurrently **rural areas have 5 times fewer specialists than metropolitan areas** indicating a drastic shortfall that rural Australia cannot afford.

Quotes attributable to AMSA President, Seniru Mudannayake:

“Health inequity is unacceptable in Australia and excluding medical students from the Commonwealth Prac Payment will only serve to widen existing health gaps.

Medical students sacrifice themselves to complete their degree, they cannot give up work or placement so instead they sacrifice their sleep, working late night or overnight shifts on top of their full time placement days.

The dream of medical school rapidly becomes a nightmare without external financial support.

One student reported that the morning ward round coffee, ordered by a consultant doctor, was the only thing besides water that they had consumed in 2 days.

Another student admitted to using donated Aldi brand weetbix to stretch soups, stews and sauces so they would have enough food to get through the week. They have been doing this for 3 months.

Students are sleeping in their cars, or commuting more than 2 hours each way to placement just to afford shelter or because they have dependent children.

Medical schools can send a student to placements anywhere in the country, often rural locations do not have part time work available.

This is unsustainable and absolutely contributing to climbing rates of suicidality and depression, 20% of medical students experience thoughts of suicidality and 27% experience symptoms of depression.

Your postcode or parents should not determine your ability to become a doctor. It is fundamentally unaustralian.

Save our future doctors, save your future health.”

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AMSA calls urgently on the Federal Government to include medical students in the Commonwealth Prac Payment.

AMSA is the representative body for almost 20,000 medical students nationally, and will continue to advocate for accessible, equitable healthcare for all Australians.

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