



Mr Dom English
Acting Deputy Secretary
Department of Education
Redistribution Pool of Medical Places
By email: cgs@education.edu.au

23 October 2019

Dear Mr English

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Department of Education's Discussion Paper, Redistribution pool of medical places.

The Medical Deans have responded to the discussion paper and proposed an alternative policy. Deakin University, like the Medical Deans, is concerned that the paper as it stands is likely to be counterproductive in terms of increasing the rural and regional workforce. There is no available evidence to suggest the re-configuration of places as proposed will impact beneficially on medical workforce in the Murray Darling region and in policy terms the proposal risks exacerbating regional maldistribution favouring some regional communities over others. The Medical Deans have proffered an alternative proposal that includes medical schools developing strategies to contribute to the regional/rural workforce, which aligns with the priorities of Deakin University.

The postgraduate training space is critical with regard to the ultimate place of practice. The growth and support of rural training hubs, combined with the strategic use of Specialist Training Program (STP) will be critical in the recruitment, training and retention of the rural workforce. This has also been highlighted in the Medical Deans proposal.

Deakin University is committed to addressing the maldistribution of the medical workforce, particularly in rural and regional Australia. The student selection process is critical in addressing workforce needs, as a rural background for prospective students provides a very strong influencing factor for future practice in a rural or regional area. In addition, an extended (two year) rural based clinical placement also plays an important role in determining the ultimate location of practice. A combination of both rural background and clinical placement location is the most powerful predictor of future practice location.

Deakin University has introduced a selection bonus for prospective students from a rural background. We now have evidence that students from rural backgrounds entering our medical program achieve equivalent academic outcomes to other students despite a lower Grade Point Average and are more likely to be experiencing financial disadvantage.

In 2019, 29 per cent of students entering the medical program at Deakin University were from a rural background. As detailed in the attached document, 22 per cent of the Commonwealth supported course load was undertaken regionally across 2016-2018. These data are somewhat misleading as the first 2 years of the medical program are University based at Waurn Ponds in Geelong. If we consider Years 3 and 4

alone, which are clinical based placements, 41 per cent of the Commonwealth supported course load was undertaken regionally.

The place of practice of Deakin University medical graduates is difficult to determine given the young program, the first students graduated in 2011, and the length of postgraduate training. However, under the auspices of The School of Medicine's Health Professions Scholarship and Education unit, longitudinal tracking projects are in progress to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the communities that we serve. We currently have data on 43 Deakin University doctors who are registered with AHPRA of which 65 per cent are practising in a major city and 35 percent in regional and remote Australia.

The School and University recognise the need for continual review and the School of Medicine currently has a dedicated group assigned to:

1. model an increase in the percentage of rural students entering the medical program at Deakin University using our current admission criteria (including the rural bonus)
2. develop a dedicated rural entry stream into the medical program
3. consider a direct entry pathway from secondary school into the medical program.

Deakin University would welcome the opportunity to work with the government in moving this process forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Iain Martin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Iain Martin
Vice-Chancellor