



POLICY TOPICS TO BE DEBATED AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

AMA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2022

Do we need improved data collection to improve access to health care in rural Australia?

Earlier this year the AMA Council of Rural Doctors (AMACRD) undertook to develop a Rural Health Report Card to highlight areas for government action to improve access to health care services in rural and remote Australia.

While data was collected on several parameters, the key finding was that there are significant problems with the accuracy of the data relating to the rural GP workforce, in particular the number of full-time equivalent GPs per 1000 population in a region.

Key differences between different data sources meant a valid report card could not be created. There are real concerns that based on Medicare data, the number of GPs reported by head of population does not reflect the real number of GPs in a town or MMM area.

Inaccurate GP workforce data makes it impossible to develop policies and programs that support the right number of GPs to work where they are needed in rural areas.

We know health care needs are greater in rural and remote areas, which also have reduced access to a range of health care services making the need to improve access to GP care even more important.

Consistent, evidence based advice to government regarding long-term medical workforce and training requirements to meet community need is a pre-requisite for resourcing appropriate medical workforce and training initiatives and for improving the health of the population.

The current Government has an opportunity to implement a better system of quantifying access to GP services across Australia and to improve access to health care for regional and rural Australians by funding and resourcing an independent workforce agency to develop robust supply and demand models for the general practice and medical workforce.

Draft motion

That our AMA calls for the reinstatement of a government funded but independent national medical workforce agency to provide consistent and evidence-based advice on medical workforce supply and demand, future workforce requirements, skilled immigration requirements and the number and distribution of training places; and a review of the way data is collected to determine the number of GPs by head of population.

Moved by: Dr Marco Giuseppin

Nat Con Policy debate: Improved data collection to improve access to healthcare in rural Australia

Seconded by: Dr Ian Kamerman