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EXTRA TRAINING PLACES NEEDED TO HELP SOLVE DOCTOR SHORTAGE

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, today said an extra 1400 medical intern places would be needed by 2013 to help ensure the looming surge of medical school graduates can become fully-trained doctors.

Dr Pesce said there would be around 3500 medical school graduates in 2012, compared to 2200 graduates at the end of 2008.

“Since 2004, the Federal Government has dramatically increased medical school places to help address workforce shortages,” Dr Pesce said.

“While there is no doubt Australia has a shortage of doctors and it was a good idea to fund extra medical school places, medical training does not stop when students graduate from university. There are currently only 2030 intern places for medical graduates available across the country and, beyond the intern year, a looming shortage of training positions right through to specialist training.

“The Federal Government now needs to work with the States and Territories to boost prevocational training positions (including internships) and specialist training positions to ensure medical school graduates can complete their training.

“We need extra resources to train all the doctors that Australia will produce over the coming years in order to meet community need. We need more supervisors and more training places, and we must better utilise training opportunities in areas such as general practice.”

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, addressed a major medical education conference in Sydney this morning, where the looming shortage of medical workforce training places will be a key topic of discussion.

“The Minister has shown a welcome interest in this issue, but there is growing concern that the Commonwealth and the States and Territories are not undertaking the planning required or putting in place the strategies needed to solve this problem before it becomes a crisis,” Dr Pesce said.

The AMA’s recently released *Priority Investment Plan For Australia’s Health System* calls for:

- By 2013, 3400 intern places guaranteed with processes under which States are accountable to the Commonwealth for delivering on this, and an annual process of monitoring by the Commonwealth to ensure that these places are provided;
- Commensurate increases in prevocational training places to meet the increasing number of junior doctors that complete their intern year;
- To restore the balance of service delivery and medical workforce training in our public hospital system and to support a sustainable and well-trained medical workforce, junior doctors must have better access to protected teaching time, while senior clinicians should be guaranteed at least 30 per cent of their ordinary working time to devote to clinical support activities such as teaching and training;

Progressively increasing the number of first year vocational training places to 2,000 by 2015, over and above the GP training places outlined above, across both public and private settings

- The Health Workforce Agency (HWA) – in close collaboration with the medical profession through the AMA – to undertake comprehensive and robust medical workforce modelling of supply and demand requirements for the next 10 years to determine the detailed number of vocational training places required in each discipline.
- Following this process, there should be a Commonwealth-State Ministers summit to lock in the commitment from governments as required to deliver on these additional vocational training places; and
- The Medical Training Review Panel to report annually on the availability of clinical training places for students at medical school, for doctors in training at prevocational and vocational levels, and to assess progress against the above targets established by the HWA. This should be accompanied by a Biennial Review of Clinical Training Places to identify training bottlenecks or shortages and to provide relevant policy advice to Government.

Over 150 medical students gathered last night in Sydney to discuss the shortage of future training places and there was overwhelming endorsement of the AMAs plan to support medical workforce training.

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