

Building a sustainable rural workforce



**RURAL DOCTORS
ASSOCIATION**
OF AUSTRALIA

“I believe in innovation and that the way you get innovation is you fund research and you learn the basic facts.”

Bill Gates

How many doctors?

- 91,504 medical practitioners registered in Australia.
- The number of medical practitioners employed in medicine increased from 68,455 to 79,653 between 2008 and 2012 (up 16.4%)
- Supply generally being greater in *Major cities* than in *Remote/Very remote* areas.
- Supply of general practitioners highest in *Remote/Very remote* areas, but overall these areas had the lowest supply of medical practitioners in total.



Urban doctors take care of patients. Rural patients take care of their doctors.

Urban patients know their doctors. Rural doctors know their patients.

Urban physicians are more likely to be fired, whereas rural physicians usually quit, move, or retire.

It's a life choice in rural health, not just an occupation.

Robert Bowman, M.D.

Are Rural Clinical Schools an effective workforce strategy?

- Study tracked a cohort of around 1,000 students from University of Western Australia, 258 of which were graduates of the Rural Clinical School.
- Found participation in the RCSWA is strongly associated with greater likelihood of working rurally.
- Graduates from urban backgrounds who participated in the RCSWA were much more likely to work in rural areas than those who did not.

MSOD-based research

- **A cluster analysis of MSOD student characteristics and practice intentions** (Dr Deborah O'Mara and Ms Yu Sun Bin)
- **Solving the GP shortage: Student characteristics that may lead to a career in general practice** (Professor Christine McMenamin and Dr Nicole Koehler)
- **Why does a rural background make doctors more likely to work in rural areas and how consistent is the effect?** A study of the rural background effect (Associate Professor Mike Jones, Dr Matthew McGrail and Professor John Humphreys)

Rural incentives, grants and supports

- Rural medical scholarships
- General Practice Rural Incentives Program
- Rural Locum Education Assistance Program
- Rural Procedural Grants Program
- HECS Reimbursement Scheme

Facts for the future....

- Where are doctors are located?
- What services doctors provide?
- How do these services align with the health care needs of the community?
- What levers can be pulled to align medical workforce supply with demand for health care services?
- What workforce policies and programs designed to match medical workforce supply with demand actually work?