



The Hon. Dr David Gillespie MP
Minister for Regional Health
Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment
Deputy Leader of the House

Media release

4 February 2022

Labor's MMM 2 announcement more about politics than patients

Anthony Albanese's proposal to move doctors out of the bush will create workforce shortages in rural and remote Australia leaving families and patients worse off.

The limited number of medical-bonded doctors and overseas-trained doctors available to be deployed into areas of workforce need will significantly shrink under Labor's plans to make Modified Monash Model (MMM) 2 areas automatic District Priority Areas (DPA).

After his appointment as Federal Regional Health Minister last year, Dr David Gillespie ordered a broader review of the DPA system and announced an exceptional circumstances review process to provide regions experiencing significant changes in their GP workforce to be re-assessed utilising current data.

"The DPA indicator provides an additional tool to assist areas of need," Dr Gillespie said.

"I know it needs reform, which is why we are undertaking an overall review of the system.

"Having an exceptional circumstances review process for individual regions will allow us to consider specific areas that should be granted DPA status as circumstances change and since I introduced that process, we have already been able to consider a number of applications and granted them DPA status.

"The exceptional circumstances review ensures DPA status aligns to current areas of need. Granting a blanket exemption for MMM 2 locations is unfair, as it means that areas currently experiencing recruiting difficulties are competing with areas that are already well serviced."

Dr Gillespie said it is well recognised that MMM 3-7 areas are rural, regional and remote, and most locations are indeed areas of need. In other areas, such as those in outer metro or low socioeconomic areas, the need is different.

"The review process I have instituted allows areas of need in outer metro and large regional locations to be considered and granted DPA status," he said.

"Labor's blank cheque declaration will make it more difficult for many areas of need in rural Australia to access the overseas doctor pool, and today's announcement is about politics rather than patients.

"I practiced medicine for 33 years. I am acutely aware of and understand the maldistribution problem of our medical workforce across Australia.

“That is why we have announced a significant number of new incentives including the fee-HELP debt waiver for service in rural and remote areas and additional investments in both the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program and the broader training pipeline.

“Glib announcements for political purposes will not fix this. It will make the problem only much worse, particularly for locations where locals can’t go on a waiting list, because they can’t access a doctor.”

Media contact: Steph Nicholls 0459 923 480