

Improving Medical Pathways Into Regional & Rural Victoria Bill 2022

A Bill for an Act relating to the improvement of medical pathways into regional & rural areas. This Bill establishes an array of government initiatives to improve the number of medical professionals working in rural and regional areas in Victoria. It legislates for international, non-Victorian and all pre-qualification doctors to serve a mandatory period of practice in regional and rural Victoria. This Bill also provides for a range of incentives for professionals to study, train and work long-term in non-metropolitan Victoria. The nature of these incentives are financial, educational and institutional.

This Bill is a series of policies by regional Victorians, for regional and rural Victorians. It will begin a much-needed reform for our health system, assuring the non-metropolitan population receives the support and talent it deserves. Moreover, it promotes a decentralised Victorian population, and serves as an indirect economic investment into regional and rural Victoria - not only in the short-term, but also decades into the future. This Bill ensures that the next generation of Victorian doctors are highly skilled and are provided with the best tools to realise their potential and deliver the best care to all Victorians. By improving the rural and regional medical system, we improve our future - for all of us.

A Bill for an Act relating to the Improving Medical Pathways Into Regional & Rural Victoria to be enacted by the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament;

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) To establish an association for medical practitioners working and studying in regional and rural Victoria;
- (b) To provide international and interstate practitioners seeking to practise in Victoria with the experience necessary in a regional or rural area;
- (c) To provide incentives for regional and rural students to stay and practise in regional/rural Victoria;
- (d) To establish a mandated regional placement program for Victorian medical students.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill—

- (a) *Full qualification* means that a person has completed the entirety of a tertiary course;
- (b) *Higher education facilities* means universities;
- (c) *International* means moving from another country to Australia;
- (d) *Interstate* means moving from another state to Victoria;
- (e) *Medical practitioners* means a physician or surgeon;
- (f) *Medical work experience* means gaining and applying industry-based skills in a workplace environment;
- (g) *Regional and rural* means the municipal districts of the Councils set out in the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002;
- (h) *RRAMP* means Regional and Rural Association of Medical Practitioners.

Part II—Establishment

Clause 4 Establishment of the Regional and Rural Association of Medical Practitioners

- 4.1 The Regional and Rural Association of Medical Practitioners (RRAMP) is to be established.
- 4.2 RRAMP shall operate under the direct oversight of the Department of Health.
- 4.3 The RRAMP shall have, but shall not be limited to, the following responsibilities:
 - (a) Provide professional development opportunities for all current medical practitioners to become mentors;
 - (b) Provide oversight and guidance for all matters pertaining to medical practitioners in rural and regional areas;

- (c) Provide oversight and facilitate the implementation of any funding and incentives for aspiring regional and rural medical practitioners;
- (d) Partner with higher education facilities to establish and implement strategies and pathways for aspiring regional and rural medical practitioners.

Clause 5 International and Interstate Medical Practitioners Seeking to Practice in Victoria

- 5.1 Any practitioners with qualifications obtained outside of Victoria shall be required to practise in a regional or rural setting for a minimum of 12 months.
- 5.2 Any reasonable relocation and accommodation costs shall be reimbursed by RRAMP.
- 5.3 All practitioners shall be provided with a mentor for a period of 6 months, under the following guidelines;
 - (a) Mentors shall directly supervise for the first 3 months;
 - (b) Mentors are then encouraged to ‘step away’ but continue observations on mentee on a regular basis;
 - (c) After the 6 month period, mentors shall ‘step away’ completely, but shall still be available if guidance is needed by the mentee.

Clause 6 Incentives to Stay in Regional and Rural Areas

- 6.1 Medical practitioners wanting to stay and work in rural and regional Victoria shall be provided with;
 - (a) Increased bulk billing rates;
 - (b) Stronger incentives to bulk bill a wider variety of services.
- 6.2 Medical practitioners shall be offered reimbursement of relocation costs during placement period and for three years after.
- 6.3 Medical practitioners who choose to stay in regional and rural Victoria shall be given monetary bonuses at the completion of each year of practice, for a maximum period of 3 years.
- 6.4 Subsidised accommodation shall be provided for all medical practitioners staying in regional and rural areas through RRAMP.

Clause 7 Mandated Regional and Rural Placement for Victorian Medical Students

- 7.1 Any student studying medicine, having achieved their degree from a Victorian university, shall be required to fulfil a minimum 6 month placement in a regional or rural setting before full qualification is granted.
- 7.2 A relocation and accommodation fund, up to a lump sum of \$15,000, shall be granted by RRAMP to the student upon placement.
- 7.3 A student of medicine who does not complete the mandatory 6 month placement will not be granted necessary qualification to practise in Victoria as an accredited medical practitioner.
- 7.4 A regional and rural placement can be done at any point during the degree, including after the degree is obtained.

Clause 8 Tertiary Fee Discounts

- 8.1 Completion of any relevant tertiary course in a regional and rural area shall result in a discounted tuition price at a student's institution of study.
- 8.2 Tuition discounts shall be received under the following guidelines;
 - (a) A student shall receive 10% off their HECS debt following the completion of their tertiary course in a regional area;
 - (b) A student shall receive 15% off their HECS debt following the completion of their tertiary course in a rural area.
- 8.3 Students completing the mandated placement shall be given a qualified mentor to work under.

Clause 9 Provision of Training Equipment and Funding

- 9.1 RRAMP, with the support of the Government, shall commit to increased funding dedicated to the procurement and sustained use of necessary equipment for the purposes of education and upskilling of regional and rural doctors on placement.
- 9.2 Funding shall be provided in the form of sponsorship for work experience placements in regional and rural Victoria.
- 9.3 Any secondary school students wishing to undertake their work experience in a regional and rural medical practice or hospital shall be reasonably assisted by RRAMP.