



Press Release: 14 May 2007

## Rural Retention Program will Continue with Increased Funding

Health Workforce Queensland is pleased to advise that the Rural Retention Program initiative, which includes the Central Payments System (CPS) and Flexible Payments Systems (FPS), will continue for the next 4 years.

The funding will continue to provide financial grants of up to \$25,000 to doctors providing primary care services in eligible rural and remote locations, Categories A to E.

In addition, the May 2007 Budget allocated an additional \$9.6 million to the Program to support an expected increase of approximately 400 GPs over the next 4 years in rural and remote Australia.

The increased number of GPs will be as a result of those doctors who work in Category A locations (6 years eligibility period) in the private sector. If they started at the inception of the Program (1999-2000) they may become eligible for their first Rural Retention Program payment. *It should be noted, Medicare billing must be maintained above the minimum threshold of \$4,000 per quarter for the 6 years to qualify in a Category A location.*

Since the inception of the Rural Retention Program, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing has spent \$128 million on retention payments to doctors working in rural and remote locations and this builds on the \$88.5 million already committed to the Program for the next 4 years.

Health Workforce Queensland to date has assessed 272 FPS applications for Queensland doctors who "fall out" of the automated CPS administered by Medicare Australia. Of these, a total of 231 eligible FPS payment requests have been made to Medicare Australia. The total FPS payments assessed for doctors in Queensland by Health Workforce Queensland and made available to eligible doctors is approximately \$2.9 million.

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