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Rural Health West welcomes decision to cut red tape for International Medical Graduates

Rural Health West chief executive officer Tim Shackleton has welcomed the Federal Government's decision to end the Visas for GPs program.

Mr Shackleton said the program, which began in 2019, placed an unnecessary bureaucratic barrier on the recruitment of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) for rural general practices.

Under the Visas for GPs program sponsoring practices were required to apply for a Health Work Certificate (HWC) after demonstrating their inability to recruit an Australian medical graduate over a period of three months.

"While the program was meant to make it easier for rural and remote communities to access a doctor, it actually created delays in recruiting IMGs who are especially important in rural and remote areas," Mr Shackleton said.

"The program was additional red tape, so removing the need to apply for a certificate is simplifying the process and making it easier for practices to recruit IMGs.

"The Government's decision to end the Visas for GPs program will further encourage the recruitment of IMGs who are so important in tackling the GP shortages we are experiencing right throughout rural and remote Australia."

Over the 2022/23 Financial year Rural Health West processed 129 HWC applications, of these 85 were from MM1 locations (66 per cent).

Ending the program is one of the key recommendations from the interim report of the independent Kruk Review.

The review was commissioned by National Cabinet to reform health practitioner registration, skill and qualification recognition for overseas trained health professionals and international students who have studied in Australia.

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Media enquiries:

Belinda Cipriano
Belinda.Cipriano@ruralhealthwest.com.au
08 6389 4500

Rural Health West aims to improve access to quality healthcare for rural communities through the provision of a highly skilled, motivated and sustainable medical and allied health workforce. We are a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health.