Doctors offered more reasons to remain rural

Postgraduate training opportunities for Tasmanian doctors will soon be expanded, in a significant development for medical professionals interested in working and training in rural regions.

The University of Tasmania has successfully secured federal funding to establish a new Rural and Regional Postgraduate Training Hub in Burnie.

The hub will work to facilitate expanded specialty training opportunities in rural and regional Tasmania, with the aim of allowing doctors to undertake their specialty training while living and working locally.

With the support of health stakeholders, Tasmania’s Postgraduate Medical Council and the specialty training colleges, more specialist training will be delivered within the North-West and Launceston hospitals, as well as surrounding general practices.

The hub will also help local medical students and graduates to map out a future career in the region.

Associate Professor Deb Wilson, a local specialist anesthetist based at the University’s Rural Clinical School, has been appointed Clinical Director of the Rural and Regional Postgraduate Training Hub.

“Specialising is an essential part of a doctor’s journey in becoming a fully accredited professional,” Associate Professor Wilson said.

“Presently, medical professionals already living and working in the North and North-West are often unable to undertake all their postgraduate training here, so they choose to relocate.

“It is often difficult to recruit and retain medical specialists to work in rural and regional areas of Tasmania because they are more likely to remain in the area where they trained.

“This new hub bridges those gaps by increasing postgraduate training opportunities in rural and regional Tasmania. We hope this will encourage our doctors to remain and reduce the number travelling interstate.
“Work is currently underway to recruit a team of professionals to lay the groundwork for the accredited specialist training programs. The funding is available until the end of 2018 so we are working quite quickly through this process.”

The Tasmanian hub is one of 26 named by the Federal Government to be operated by universities across rural and regional Australia, in a move to boost Australia’s regional and rural health workforce.

The Federal Government has committed just over $1 million to establish the hub, through an extension of the existing Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program, a Commonwealth contract which also funds the Rural Clinical School in Burnie, the Centre for Rural Health in Launceston and the statewide Rural Placement Expansion Project for nursing, dentistry and allied health students.

Professor Denise Fassett, Dean of the University’s Faculty of Health, welcomed the development and said it was pleasing to see more opportunities for graduates.

“The Faculty of Health will have oversight of the training hub and it will complement our existing Bachelor of Surgery/Bachelor of Medicine curriculum by offering another pathway for our graduates in their professional journey,” Professor Fassett said.

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