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Slash debts so expert care can head to the bush

The Australian Clinical Psychology Association (ACPA) has called on the Federal Government to respond to the mental health crisis in the bush by slashing university debt for clinical psychologists who commit to work in rural and regional areas.

ACPA President Prof. Caroline Hunt said there was ballooning mental health need across Australia and this was felt particularly hard in rural and remote areas where expert mental health professionals, such as clinical psychologists, were least likely to be found.

“We’re calling on the Government to really recognise the importance of mental health care for Australians and match today’s commitment to slash university debt for doctors and nurse practitioners who work in the bush by including clinical psychologists in this plan,” Prof Hunt said.

“We know there are simply not enough mental health professionals in regional, rural and remote areas and it’s time for the Government to really support Australians in the bush by helping the workforce to come to them.

“We need doctors and nurses in the bush to keep people physically well and we need clinical psychologists on the ground in these communities to support the mental health needs of Australians.

“We know there is a mental health crisis across Australia and getting people trained and then into the communities of need is a real challenge.

“Medicare Benefit Schedule telehealth rebates for psychology sessions have been a valuable tool to help people in rural, regional and remote communities access care during the pandemic. We need the Federal Government to urgently give patients and their mental health team a commitment funding for this vital care will extend past December and at the same time we need meaningful planning for the future.

“Supporting expert mental health professionals, such as clinical psychologists, to find work and establish themselves in rural and remote communities is a key step to improving mental health care for Australians.”

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