**Conference stream: research in policy and practice - including impacts, innovation, funding models and workforce innovations**

Workshop – 1 hr

**Workshop Title: Bonded but not alone – translating policy into practical support**

Australia continues to have a maldistributed health workforce, which gives rural and remote people lower access to health services than their metropolitan counterparts. The Commonwealth government funds a suite of programs across the span of health professional training to address this imbalance.

Participants in the Bonded Scholarship Scheme and the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship scheme commit to work in a rural area following specialisation, in return for a medical school place, and/or financial support. Bonded scholars are keen to have more support, and it is known that doctors who train in rural areas are more likely to work in rural areas. Doctors who wish to become general practitioners are also expected to work in rural areas during their training and over 50% of training occurs in rural areas. More recently the Regional Training Hubs (part of the Government’s Integrated Rural Training Pipeline for Medicine) have been funded to work with key medical education and training stakeholders to identify and integrate rural medical training opportunities for doctors at all stages of their medical training (from medical student to specialist trainee). The hubs will provide support to medical students including bonded scholars. Rural Workforce Agencies (RWA) are now expected to determine community workforce needs and also to support bonded scholars through their training.

This policy to invest in infrastructure and personnel should increase training in, and support for more doctors in rural areas. But how do we make sure this happens? What works best for bonded scholars, and how can training hubs and RWAs help?

**Workshop outline**

This workshop will commence with a brief overview of the bonded scholarship schemes, the training hubs and the new RWA contract. Participants will then workshop in small groups the following questions:

What support works best for rural bonded scholars?

What support can training hubs and RWAs provide?

How can rural bonded scholars be linked with training hubs and RWAs?

Who else would want to be included in this discussion, such as the Rural Doctors Association of Australia or specialist medical colleges?

**Who should attend this workshop?**

Rural practitioners, bonded scholarship holders, regional training organisation and rural training hub staff, RWA staff

Each group will discuss one or more of the questions, and then present their ideas in a final plenary session. A write up of the workshop will be distributed to participants, the National Rural Student Network, RTOs, the rural training hubs and RWAs.