

# Bonded Medical Schemes:

## Student opinions and intentions



### 2014 NRHSN Medical Officers:

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## INTRODUCTION

The Bonded Medical Place (BMP) and Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship (MRBS) schemes commenced in 2004 and 2001 respectively. The 2015-16 federal budget has seen significant changes to these schemes, including closure of the MRBS to new applicants; a reduction of the length of the Return of Service Obligation (RSO) for new BMP applicants; and cessation of the Bonded Support Program (BSP), which provided a range of networking and educational support services to bonded students.

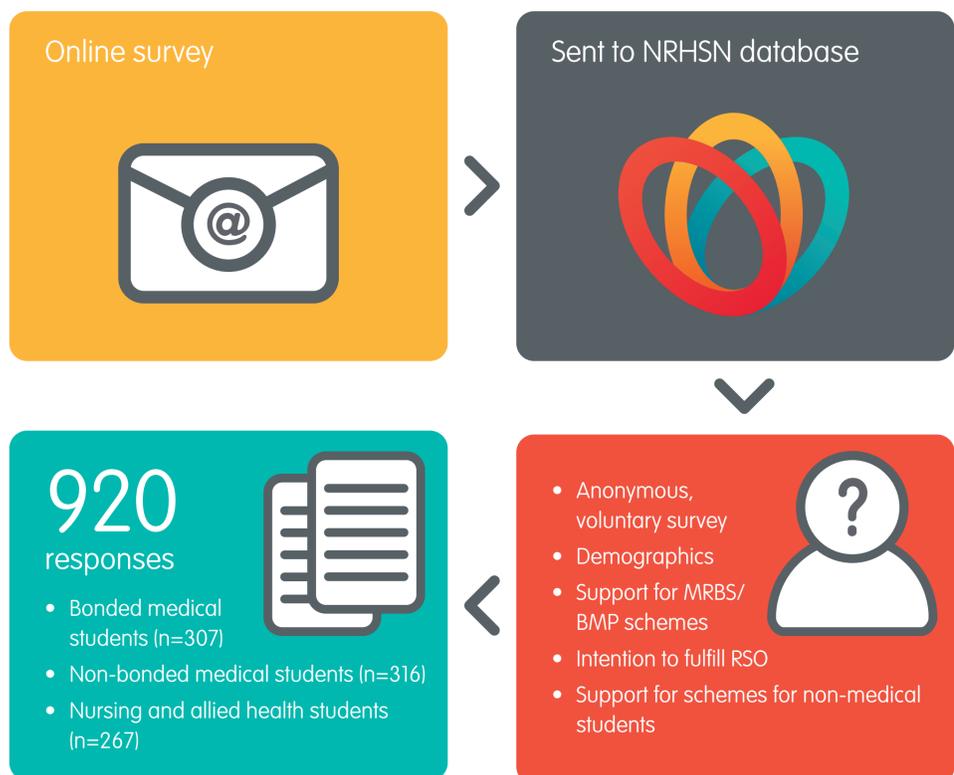
Due to the significant time between commencing medical studies and obtaining fellowship, only small numbers of bonded students have commenced their RSO at present.<sup>1</sup> However, despite anecdotal claims made in previous reports that significant numbers of bonded students were not intending to fulfill their RSO,<sup>2,3</sup> there has been no published research on students' attitudes towards the schemes or on bonded students' intentions regarding their RSO obligations.

## WHAT ARE THE BONDED SCHEMES?

Students who accepted a BMP prior to 2016 agreed to complete an RSO in a District of Workforce Shortage or Modified Monash Model 4-7 location of their choice for a period equal to the length of their medical degree. From 2016 onwards, applicants will only be required to complete a 12 month RSO.

Students holding an MRBS receive approximately \$26,000 per annum for the duration of their medical degree in return for completing a 6 year RSO (subject to scaling) in an RA2-5 location after obtaining fellowship. As of the 2015-16 federal budget announcements, the MRBS has been closed to new applicants.

## METHODS



Multiple logistic regression was used to explore the factors affecting bonded medical students' support for the BMP & MRBS schemes. Levels of support were compared between bonded & non-bonded medical students using chi-squared analysis.

## ABOUT THE NRHSN

The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN) represents the future of rural health in Australia. It has more than 9,000 members who belong to 28 university Rural Health Clubs from all states and territories.

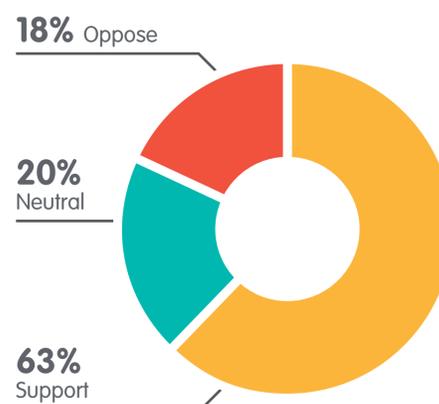
It is Australia's only multi-disciplinary student health network, bringing together people studying medicine, nursing and allied health and encouraging them to pursue rural health careers.

## REFERENCES

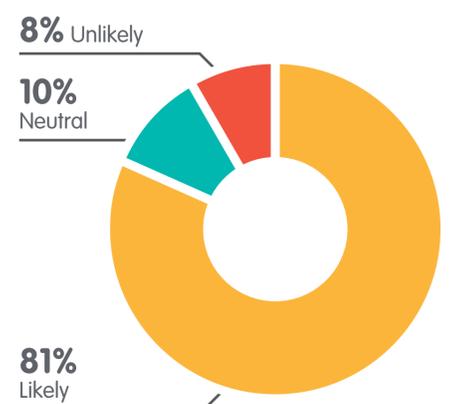
- 1 Commonwealth of Australia. (2015). Proof Committee Hansard: Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee, Estimates. Tuesday 2nd June 2015. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- 2 Mason J. 2013. Review of Australian Government Health Workforce Programs, Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.
- 3 Duckett S, Bredon P & Ginnivan L. 2013. Access all areas: New solutions for GP shortages in rural Australia, Grattan Institute, Melbourne.

## RESULTS

### Support for bonded schemes (medical students, n=586)



### Likelihood to complete RSO (bonded students, n=302)



### We further found:

- No difference in support between bonded and non-bonded medical students (p=0.468)
- Significant difference in opposition to the schemes between BMP students (32%) and MRBS students (7%) (p=0.002)
- Significantly greater level of support in students who had accessed BSP resources (55%) versus those who had not (42%) (p=0.047)
- Increasing opposition with increasing year of study amongst bonded students (odds ratio 1.33 [95% CI 1.06-1.67]; p=0.013)
- 72% of nursing and allied health students in favour of similar schemes for non-medical students

**This survey was conducted in 2014; hence it reflects respondents' views on the programs with a 4-6 year RSO.**

## CONCLUSIONS

- Broad support for bonded medical schemes amongst a large sample of bonded and non-bonded medical students
- Majority of bonded medical students intend to complete their RSO
- Students who receive targeted support (e.g. BSP) are more likely to support bonded schemes
- Future program monitoring could review where health professionals are completing their RSO obligations and investigate support and retention strategies
- Broad support for similar schemes for nursing and allied health students