

**Wednesday 30 November 2022**

**Parliament supports amendment to recognise and act on national GP and nursing crises**

**Dr Sophie Scamps MP Statement**

Yesterday I successfully moved an amendment to the Government's Higher Education Support Bill 2022.

The Higher Education Support Bill abolishes or reduces HELP debt for doctors and nurses who work in rural and remote areas. The legislation aims to help address the GP and nursing shortages faced by communities in regional Australia.

I supported this legislation but also called on the government to recognise that every community in Australia – regional, rural and metropolitan – is impacted by a shortage of nurses and GPs.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has forecast that Australia could face a shortage of 10,600 GPs by 2031-32<sup>1</sup>. The Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation (ANMF) estimates there is also a shortage of 8,000 nurses around the country right now<sup>2</sup>, while by 2032, we could face a shortage of 110,000 nurses.

My amendment, which passed on the voices after receiving support from the Albanese Government, requires a review of the Higher Education Support program every three years to ensure it is doing what it was designed to do – increase the number of doctors and nurses practicing in rural and regional Australia. This review must be tabled to Parliament within 15 days of its completion, and the Minister for Health must table a response to the review within 30 days.

Addressing Australia's GP and nursing crises should be a national priority and the Higher Education Support Amendment Bill is an important measure. My amendment ensures transparency and accountability around how taxpayer funds are being used to address these crises and assess its success. Should the program be effective, I'd like to see it applied more broadly.

I thank the government for its collaborative approach to improving this legislation and know that by working together Parliament can do more to address Australia's GP and nurse shortages.

ENDS

For media inquiries please contact Chris Williams:

- 0480 386 879
- [media@sophiescamps.com.au](mailto:media@sophiescamps.com.au) / [chris.j.williams@aph.gov.au](mailto:chris.j.williams@aph.gov.au)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ama.com.au/ama-rounds/25-november-2022/articles/ama-report-projects-staggering-gp-shortage#:~:text=Australia%20is%20facing%20a%20shortage,of%2010%2C200%20full%20time%20GPs.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.anmf.org.au/media-campaigns/news/australia-facing-nursing-shortage-as-more-than-two-years-of-covid-takes-its-toll>