



## Better broadband good for patients

A national broadband network would create new opportunities for Australians in rural and regional areas to benefit from medical services delivered using internet technology, the AMA said today.

AMA Federal President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, said faster broadband would make it easier for doctors in rural and regional areas to consult with city colleagues when diagnosing and treating patients.

“To improve medical care in the bush, broadband services should be rolled out as far as possible into rural and regional Australia and be able to support the transmission of high-quality medical images thousands of kilometres. This would speed up diagnosis and perhaps reduce the need for some patients to travel long-distances for specialist consultations,” Dr Capolingua said.

“The range of medical services which can be delivered remotely will increase as technology improves in coming years.

“However, improved broadband services will not eliminate the need for more doctors in regional areas and for rural hospitals to be properly funded and staffed. Broadband is a tool for doctors and hospitals to use in patient care.”

Dr Capolingua said the Government should increase funding for electronic health infrastructure in the May Budget to ensure that doctors and hospitals would be ready to take advantage of improved broadband services.

“E-health infrastructure and better broadband services will enable patient information to be securely shared electronically between health care providers. This will deliver real improvements to patient care,” she said.

A key initiative in the National E-Health Strategy endorsed by Health Ministers in December last year is connecting health care providers through national broadband services.

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