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\$1.3m centre to tackle rural doctor shortage

A NEW \$1.3million health school campus opened in Port Lincoln last week to encourage more medical professionals to practice in rural and regional areas.

The Spencer Gulf Rural Health School Port Lincoln campus is one of eight around South Australia aimed at giving medical and nursing students practical experience and a taste of life in a regional area.

Head of the Spencer Gulf Rural Health School Professor Jonathan Newbury said campuses such as the new Port Lincoln facility let students experience a regional lifestyle and gave them different career options.

As a country general practitioner, Professor Newbury, said it was important to provide health education in the country.

He said there would be a focus at the new school on mental health, obstetrics, aboriginal health and conditions such as obesity, high cholesterol and diabetes.

Assistant Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Christopher Pyne opened the new building last Thursday.

Mr Pyne said it would benefit the town and the broader rural community in South Australia.

Mr Pyne said the Australian Government had provided \$1.3 million in capital funding for the Port Lincoln campus through its \$830 million Rural Health Strategy and \$21 million in recurrent funding to the University of Adelaide for the operation of the Rural Clinical School from June 2001 until June 2008.

"The Government is committed to sustaining the rural medical workforce and its growing network of Rural Clinical Schools is a very important part of fulfilling that commitment," he said.

Executive Dean of the faculty of Health Sciences at Adelaide University Professor Justin Beilby said the joint venture between University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia was part of the solution to getting a stronger medical workforce in rural areas.