



Media release

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Country doctors to forge the future of sustainable medical services at major national conference

Rural Medicine Australia 2011, 28 to 30 October, Alice Springs Convention Centre

Rural doctors will be taking the latest in rural and remote medical skills, knowledge, and issues to the heart of Australia next week as they gather in Alice Springs for their key national conference, *Rural Medicine Australia 2011* (RMA 2011).

The theme of this year's conference is 'Rural Generalism – the future of sustainable medical services', and the delegates will be focused on plotting a course to promote the delivery of more doctors and other health professionals to the bush, and better access to quality health care for rural and remote Australians.

Hosted by the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), RMA 2011 will bring together more than 300 doctors, registrars, academics, educators, junior doctors, medical students and other health professionals with an interest in rural and remote health care.

The three day conference will feature influential key speakers from Australia and abroad; a national medico-political forum; and a wide range of clinical training sessions and research presentations.

RDAA President, Dr Paul Mara, said: "*Rural Medicine Australia* is the biggest event of its kind, catering specifically for rural doctors across Australia with a sole focus on healthcare delivery in rural and remote settings.

"This year the focus of our keynote sessions is firmly on securing the future of quality medical care in the bush. We believe this involves having the structures and funding in place for an Australia-wide Rural Generalist training program that would give young doctors the appropriate skills to work as a rural doctor, and a viable career path to follow.

"Another feature of the conference will be the medico-political forum featuring prominent politicians and rural health experts, which always results in a lively debate. The Federal Minister for Indigenous Health, Warren Snowdon, and Shadow Health Minister, Peter Dutton, have confirmed their participation in this forum. This year we anticipate much of the discussion will be around the controversial *Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas* scheme that is making it much more difficult for many small rural towns to attract much-needed doctors. A Senate Inquiry into this scheme was announced only last week."

ACRRM President, Dr Jeff Ayton, said: "This year's keynote speakers have a predominantly grass-roots focus, and will be speaking on ways to ensure the delivery of high quality, sustainable healthcare to rural communities.

"We have the head of both Health Workforce Australia and Health Workforce New Zealand who will be addressing the key issue of developing and maintaining a sustainable health workforce in rural areas. Other speakers include Dr Pieter Mourik, a rural specialist obstetrician in Albury NSW and winner of last year's Westpac RDAA Rural Doctor of the Year Award, and Professor Roger Strasser, from Canada who will be discussing the Canadian success in rural placement of medical graduates- the critical rural pipeline.

"Another feature of the main conference program will be the Rural Generalist Forum, which will include panel members from around Australia who will be discussing the successes and challenges of implementing a Rural Generalist Training Pathway state by state."

Held at the Alice Springs Convention Centre in Australia's Red Centre, RMA 2011 will also feature training sessions in the key skills needed by medical professionals in rural and remote areas and the announcement of the Westpac RDAA and ACRRM awards for 2011 at a gala dinner.

Sessions on offer at RMA 2011 include courses and workshops in advanced life support; emergency obstetric skills; foetal monitoring, mental health core skills; forensic medicine; video-telehealth consultation initiatives; and bush emergency skills. Also on offer is a visit to the Royal Flying Doctor Service's Alice Springs Base.

For more information on this must-attend conference, including the full program, visit www.acrrm.com.au.

Media are strongly encouraged to attend *Rural Medicine Australia 2011*. Please contact Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638 or Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890 for further details and to provide advance notice of your attendance.

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