

MEDIA ALERT



Tuesday 10 May 2011

Rural Doctors Association President — availability for budget commentary today and tomorrow

**** Including doorstep, Senate Entrance, Parliament House, 10.30am Wednesday ****

The President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), Dr Paul Mara, will be in Canberra for tonight's federal budget and will be available for media interviews today and tomorrow.

After attending the health budget lock-up this **afternoon/evening**, he will provide comments to media at the Press Gallery at Parliament House. He will also be available for telephone interviews.

On **Wednesday**, Dr Mara and RDAA CEO, Jenny Johnson, will also be available for interviews from Canberra, both in person and over the phone. Dr Mara will also hold a media doorstep at the Senate Entrance, Parliament House, at 10:30am AEST on **Wednesday**.

RDAA continues to call for key measures to better attract and retain more doctors in rural Australia, including:

- An improved federal support package to ensure the sustainability of rural practice, including ensuring better supports are available to enable doctors to take adequate leave; further addressing structural issues such as the upgrading and expansion of rural practices; and ensuring that the higher level skills, commitment and responsibility of rural practice is adequately reflected through Medicare. RDAA continues to advocate for:
 - (a) Increased Medicare rebates to recognise and reward rural doctors with advanced skills training who utilise these skills in rural and remote communities
 - (b) Rural isolation payments for rural doctors, based on a classification system that appropriately recognises the remoteness and isolation of many smaller rural communities
 - (c) Increased support for rural doctors and practices that provide rural clinical placements to medical students and young doctors, in order to assist them to meet the growing demand for such placements stemming from the increased number of doctors now graduating from Australia's universities
- Measures to support and assist overseas trained doctors who wish to work in rural and remote Australia to acquire the necessary skills.
- A commitment from the Federal Government to urgently review the Australian Standard Geographical Classification - Remoteness Areas (ASGC-RA) system, which is now being used to determine the level of incentive payments provided to rural doctors. Under the new system, many small rural towns like Tumut in NSW are now classified as having the same level of 'rurality' as larger centres like Wagga and even Hobart, so doctors practising in such locations are now eligible for the same level of incentive payments. This has effectively removed any incentive for doctors to practise in many smaller towns across Australia.

Available for interview:
Media contact:

RDAA President, Dr Paul Mara and RDAA CEO, Jenny Johnson.
Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890.