

# ***RURAL DOCTORS ASSOCIATION (NSW) INC***

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## **NSW Labor urged to follow Coalition lead on rural health wishlist**

The Rural Doctors Association of NSW (RDA NSW) has welcomed pre-election commitments by the NSW Coalition to improve access to healthcare in country NSW, saying the Coalition has “ticked various boxes” in RDA NSW’s election wishlist, *Proposals for rural health for the Parliamentary term 2011 to 2015*.

**RDA NSW is now urging NSW Labor to follow suit and commit to several key initiatives required to get the rural health system in NSW off life-support.**

During the election campaign, the NSW Liberal and National Coalition has announced that it will:

- support a rural generalist training program and rural pathway for GP training in NSW
- direct around 55% of new capital funding in hospital infrastructure to regional NSW—including major developments at Dubbo, Parkes, Forbes, Tamworth, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga

Other commitments by the Coalition have included:

- increasing Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) payments to rural patients at a cost of \$28 million over 4 years. This followed the attendance by senior NSW Coalition MPs at a *Rebuilding the regions workshop* convened in Dubbo last July by the NSW Farmers’ Association and other groups. Coolah doctor (and now RDA NSW President), Dr Tilak Dissanayake, represented RDA NSW at the workshop.
- Recognition by Coalition MPs at the *Rebuilding the regions workshop* that postgraduate advanced training for rural doctors is important in ensuring they can best meet the needs of their often isolated communities, as well as recognition of the importance of locums in relieving resident doctors in rural communities.
- A commitment to address the impact and need for greater intern capacity and other post-graduate medical training in NSW public hospitals, and develop adequate programs for the training of registrars following completion of their residency—RDA NSW believes both measures have the potential to positively impact on the delivery of future doctors to rural locations.
- Undertaking an independent review of NSW hospitals including equipment and technology to gain a transparent picture of the condition of the state’s hospital and health infrastructure. The Coalition has advised that doctors and other stakeholders will be involved in the audit.

“In previous months we have been meeting with senior representatives from both sides of NSW politics to outline our major concerns with current rural health policy and funding in NSW” RDA NSW President, Dr Tilak Dissanayake, said.

“It has been very encouraging to see the NSW Coalition listening closely to our concerns and responding to them so pro-actively, as well as committing to engage with doctors and others in the health policy-making process.

“In the days remaining before NSW election day, we urge NSW Labor to follow suit with any significant rural health commitments it might be considering making.

“There is much to be done to get the rural health system in NSW back on track—we hope that whichever side of politics is in power next week, it will work hard to deliver a better healthcare deal for those living in the bush.”

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See RDA NSW’s *Proposals for rural health for the Parliamentary term 2011 to 2015* at [www.rdansw.com.au](http://www.rdansw.com.au).

**Available for interview:** RDA NSW President, Dr Tilak Dissanayake, on 0488 732 679.  
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