

RURAL DOCTORS ASSOCIATION (NSW) INC

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Rural doctors thank NSW Government for helping rural patients

The Rural Doctors Association of NSW (RDA NSW) has today thanked the NSW Government for increasing the assistance available to rural patients who have to travel for medical treatment.

Dr Tilak Dissanayake, President of RDA NSW, said that the boost to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, worth \$28 million over four years, was well overdue and will make a real difference to patients in the bush.

“The assistance that has been available to rural patients to help cover the expense of long journeys to access specialist care has been woeful,” Dr Dissanayake said.

“An increase in these allowances has been something that RDA NSW has campaigned for over many years and we thank NSW Health Minister, Jillian Skinner, for acting so quickly on this issue.

“It is hard to believe that it is 11 years since there has been any increase in accommodation assistance payments, which will now be \$43 for single accommodation (up from \$33) and \$60 for double accommodation (up from \$46).

“The travel allowance has gone up from 15 cents per km to 19 cents per km and the funding for staying with relatives or friends has increased from a pitiful \$30 to a more realistic \$140 per week,” Dr Dissanayake said.

“Possibly the best thing about this reform is that these subsidies will now be available to **all** rural patients who have to travel 200 km or more in one week for treatment – previously they were available exclusively to patients undergoing renal dialysis.”

This latest policy announcement is the second election promise delivered in regards to rural health and Dr Dissanayake said that it was very encouraging to see the NSW Coalition, and in particular Mrs Skinner, responding so pro-actively, to the concerns of rural doctors.

“There is much to be done to get the rural health system in NSW back on track but this is further evidence that work is being done to deliver a better healthcare deal for those living in the bush.

“We thank the O’Farrell Government for listening to their rural constituents and increasing the help available to them while they are going through what is invariably a difficult time,” Dr Dissanayake said.

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