

Friday 11th November 2011

Rural doctors welcome SA government support for a rural generalist pathway

The Rural Doctors Association of South Australia (RDASA) has welcomed the release of an SA government commissioned report that supports the establishment of a rural generalist training pathway in SA.

Country Health SA commissioned the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency (RDWA) to manage the consultation and development process around the *Road to rural general practice* report.

It followed concerns expressed by RDASA and others that rural SA is facing a looming workforce crisis, with many of the state's existing rural doctors reaching retirement but not being replaced by the next generation of rural generalist doctors trained in the advanced medical skills needed in country areas.

The report was released today by the CEO of Country Health SA, Belinda Moyes, at the RDWA / RDASA joint annual conference in Adelaide.

The proposed pathway will provide young doctors with better access to training in the more advanced procedural and other skills required of rural and remote doctors including; obstetrics, anaesthetics, accident and emergency medicine, indigenous health care and advanced mental health care.

Training places in these and other skill areas would be guaranteed to doctors undertaking the pathway and more training would be available on-the-ground in regional and rural settings.

"We are thrilled that Country Health SA believes in the future of a home-grown rural medical workforce for this state" RDASA President, Dr Tim Wood, said.

"For too long we have seen rural doctors in country SA retiring after many years of service and simply not being able to find young doctors with advanced skills to replace them."

"This report, and the proposed rural generalist pathway, is about rural general practitioners being able to acquire *in South Australia* the necessary additional skills to service rural South Australia. It is about recognising a rural medical career as a high-grade medical speciality, and it is about retaining some of our brightest young doctors *in this state*, rather than losing them to training positions interstate."

"RDASA is keen to work closely with CHSA to guide the implementation of this breakthrough in ensuring a secure future medical workforce for rural SA. RDASA also acknowledges the support of the SA Health Minister, John Hill, in the compilation of this report."

"Rural practice is different. In many cases, rural doctors provide not just primary care from their surgeries but are frequently called upon to attend the local hospital to provide emergency care, surgical care, anaesthetic care and obstetric care. They are also called upon to manage a range of more complex conditions in the absence of local specialists. Training the future generation of rural doctors in these and other skill areas is critical, and that is where the proposed rural generalist training pathway is so important."

Dr Wood also commended RDWA for its outstanding work in making the annual rural doctor conference so worthwhile.

"This conference allowed rural doctors to celebrate the diversity that is rural medicine. Rural doctors had the opportunity to showcase the clever and innovative work that they do in rural health, education and clinical practice. Keynote speakers explored the strengths and weaknesses of current rural health delivery, both hospital focused as well as collaborative primary health care. Rural doctors were encouraged and empowered

to consider publishing research to achieve quality improvement in their day to day practice.”

“RDASA partnered with RDWA to deliver the education content of this stimulating and inspiring agenda and we wish to sincerely thank RDWA’s CEO, Lyn Poole, the board and staff for making the conference so rewarding.”

The annual conference of the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency and Rural Doctors Association of South Australia is being held this Friday and Saturday at the Glenelg Pier Hotel, Adelaide.

Available for interview: Dr Tim Wood on 0427 213 044.
RDASA Vice President, Dr Peter Rischbieth, on 0408 813 143.

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