

MEDIA RELEASE

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Regional cancer centre great news for Albury-Wodonga

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has welcomed an announcement by the Federal Government that it will provide \$65 million to establish an integrated regional cancer centre for the Albury-Wodonga region.

The new cancer centre will join 22 other regional cancer centre projects around Australia.

“The Government’s commitment to fund this next cancer centre is very welcome news for those living in and around Albury-Wodonga” RDAA President, Dr Paul Mara, said.

“Unfortunately, depending on the type of cancer involved, rural and remote Australians diagnosed with cancer can be more likely to die of the disease in the five years following their diagnosis than those who live in the city and have easier access to treatment.

“The more we can deliver cancer treatment closer to home for those living in the bush, the easier it will be for rural Australians to undergo the advanced cancer treatment they need, and the better outcomes they will have.

“That’s why the establishment of regional cancer centres like Albury-Wodonga’s are so important.”

Dr Mara also welcomed recognition by the Federal Minister for Regional Australia, Simon Crean, on ABC TV’s *QandA* program last night that training medical students and young doctors, as well as other health professionals, in rural settings is an important and effective way of enticing them into a career in rural practice.

“The Minister is spot-on in this regard, and that is why the Government’s continuing support of programs that enable medical students and young doctors to undertake part or all of their training in rural areas is so critical and so welcome” Dr Mara said.

“Given the time and infrastructure costs for rural practices and rural doctors in providing these training placements, additional supports are now required to assist these practices and doctors to meet growing demand for placements from the many more medical students who are now graduating from our universities.”

Dr Mara also welcomed strong acknowledgement on *QandA* by the federal independent MP, Tony Windsor, that the provision of health services must be the top priority when it comes to decision-making regarding regional, rural and remote Australia by the Federal Parliament.

“At the top of the list needs to be an urgent review of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) system which, in its current form, threatens the very future of rural medical services in numerous smaller rural towns by providing doctors with the same level of retention and relocation incentives whether they practise in the smaller towns or move to larger regional centres and even Hobart (which can offer greater professional and family supports and services)” Dr Mara said.

Available for interview: Dr Paul Mara (RDAA President) and Jenny Johnson (RDAA CEO).
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