

# MEDIA RELEASE



Thursday, 10 February 2011

## Rural doctors recognised with Order of Australia awards

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) congratulates three member doctors on their recognition for service to medical care and their communities in the Order of Australia awards.

Dr Paul Mara, RDAA President, said that it was great to see such hardworking and dedicated country doctors recognised on a national level.

“Three of our members received awards this year, and all are, or were, practising GPs in rural towns,” Dr Mara said.

“Each of them has worked long and hard for the benefit their communities and the medical profession and this recognition is richly deserved.”

Those recognised were:

**Professor Roger Peter Strasser**  
**Member of the Order of Australia (AM)**

Prof Strasser was awarded AM for his service to medicine through improving the health care for people living in rural and remote communities in developed and developing nations as an educator, researcher and practitioner. Prof Strasser was a General Practitioner in private practice, Moe Victoria, from 1985 to 2002, when he left to take up a position as Founding Dean, Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Laurentian University and Lakehead University. He is still in this position.

Amongst other accomplishments, he was also Professor and Head, School of Rural Health, Monash University, 1992-2002 and established the Victorian Advanced Training for General Practice Program (state funded and administered by the Department of General Practice), 1996. Prof Strasser was awarded Life Membership of the Rural Doctors Association of Victoria for his dedicated service to the organisation from its inception until his move overseas.

**Dr John Andrew Pickering**  
**Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)**

Dr Pickering was awarded OAM for his service to medicine, particularly in rural and regional areas, and to the Indigenous community. He has been a General Practitioner to Dimboola and the surrounding districts since 1979.

**Dr Ramaswamy Thangavelu**  
**Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)**

Dr Thangavelu was awarded OAM for his service to the community of Crookwell, and as a medical practitioner there since 1975. Along with being very active in the local Rotary Club, holding a number of offices over a 35 year period, he has also provided a range of medical care services, including to the Crookwell Frail Aged Association and Adviser to the Medication Advisory Committee.

“That each of these doctors has spent most of their career as General Practitioners in rural areas is testament to the vital role country doctors play in their local community,” Dr Mara said.

*continued over...*

“The rewarding career of a rural generalist doctor is often undervalued and more needs to be done to encourage young doctors to consider a career in rural practice.

“We hope that the recognition given to positive role models such as Prof Strasser, Dr Pickering and Dr Thangavelu will help both state and federal governments to recognise that the critical shortage of doctors in the bush is more than just a numbers game, and that they make a vital difference to the communities they serve.”

<ends>

---

**Available for interview:** Dr Paul Mara on 0466 665 933

**Alternative media contact:** Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638