



Case study 2

Rural NSW towns miss out under ASGC-RA system

Under the ASGC-RA, many small rural towns across NSW are now competing directly with Hobart, Darwin, Cairns, Townsville and other major regional cities for doctors. This means that doctors working in small towns like Hay, Cowra and Deniliquin receive the same or *even lower* relocation and retention payments than they would by working in the larger regional cities! NSW's small rural towns already faced uphill battles recruiting enough doctors to service their populations...now things have got worse. Here are just a few examples:

Town: Hay

ASGC-RA classification: RA3 (Outer Regional) — same as the cities of Cairns, Townsville and Darwin
Hay sits on the edge of the RA3 classification area, and is literally less than 5 metres from the boundary where RA3 changes to RA4 (Remote).

Hay is a small rural town of around 2600 people located 700km from Sydney in isolated Far West NSW. It sits literally on the edge of the RA3 (Outer Regional) classification level. If the medical practice in Hay was to relocate just a few metres out of town, it would then be in the RA4 (Remote) classification. If less than 5 metres out of Hay is classified as 'Remote', surely Hay should be classified as 'Remote' too! Taking a comparison, given various coastal NSW locations like Nambucca Heads, Bega, Pambula and Narooma are classified as RA3 (Outer Regional), Hay should at least be classified as RA4 (Remote) given its isolated inland location.

Town: Cowra

ASGC-RA classification: RA2 (Inner Regional) — same as Hobart and major regional cities like Albury, Wagga and Tamworth. One classification step less remote than Cairns, Townsville and Darwin.

Cowra is a town of around 9500 people, located 310km from Sydney in Central West NSW. The town and surrounding region continues to suffer from a significant shortage of doctors. Local doctors in Cowra work in private practice and also provide 24/7 on-call to the local hospital. By comparison, the NSW town of Picton is also classified as RA2 (and only half an hour up the Hume Highway from Campbelltown and its major hospital). Cowra, on the other hand, is more remote and much further from major hospital supports. This is not to say that Picton shouldn't be classified as RA2, rather that Cowra should be classified more remotely. There are houses on the edge of Cowra that are located in the RA2 (Inner Regional) area but literally across the street the classification changes to RA3 (Outer Regional). If a medical practice established its surgery at Cowra Airport it would be in the RA3 (Outer Regional) area, with the increased relocation and retention payments that would provide!

Town: Deniliquin

ASGC-RA classification: RA2 (Inner Regional) — same as Hobart and major regional cities like Albury, Wagga and Tamworth. One classification step less remote than Cairns, Townsville and Darwin.

The small town of Deniliquin, population 7500, is 750kms from Sydney in South West NSW. It is literally an RA2 (Inner Regional) island in the middle of an RA3 (Outer Regional) sea. The RA2 classification is restricted to the town itself, with an RA3 classification surrounding it on all sides. There is a substantial shortage of doctors in Deniliquin and the surrounding region, with local doctors now providing a 1-in-6 after-hours and on-call service. The fact that Deniliquin is now competing directly with Cairns, Townsville, Hobart, Darwin and other major regional centres for much-needed doctors is not helping matters.

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