



**RURAL DOCTORS
ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA**
Caring for the Country

Media release

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Committed, passionate GP from Gunnedah named Rural Doctor of the Year

Dr Grahame Deane from the NSW town of Gunnedah has been recognised for his commitment, passion and enthusiasm towards rural medicine and towards his community and awarded the Westpac RDAA Rural Doctor of the Year Award for 2011.

Dr Deane received the award at a gala dinner at *Rural Medicine Australia 2011*, the national conference of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) and Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), held in Alice Springs on Saturday night.

Dr Deane has been a GP in Gunnedah since 1982, and along with running his group practice in the town, he also provides obstetric, anaesthetic and surgical services to the Gunnedah hospital.

RDAA President, Dr Paul Mara, said that many advanced medical services were still available to the Gunnedah community thanks to Dr Deane's dedication and hard work, and this award was in recognition of his work both for his local community and in advocating for rural doctors more broadly.

"Grahame has continued to provide many services in order to preserve them at Gunnedah hospital despite a shortage of other doctors in the area to help provide the after-hours and on-call duties resulting in him working countless hours at nights and on weekends," Dr Mara said.

"His commitment to his local community is also demonstrated through the time and energy he has devoted towards a plan to build an integrated primary care health centre for Gunnedah, with the vision of helping attract and train new doctors with the right skills to the Gunnedah district. So far \$6.3million in funding for this centre has been raised, largely due to Grahame's hard work.

"Despite his heavy workload, Grahame has always been ready to go the extra mile for his profession and over the years has always made the time to train the many GP registrars and medical students that have come through his practice.

"He has been a passionate and articulate advocate for the rural medical community, and has worked tirelessly in many other ways: on the board of as Chairman and Medical Director of the Barwon Division of General Practice for 13 years, spending seven as chairman; on the board of the NSW Rural Doctors Network for 10 years with two years as chairman; and serving on a number of committees and boards including the Australian Remote and Rural Workforce Agency Group and is now Director of the New England Medicare Local.

"Grahame is extremely passionate about, and has been a great advocate for, his community and for rural health. He has provided a service to the Gunnedah community above and beyond the call of duty. He has persisted in an area of workforce shortage with his passion and enthusiasm never flagging," Dr Mara said.

"It is an honour for us to be able to recognise such a hardworking, deserving rural doctor with the Westpac RDAA Rural Doctor of the Year award."

Dr Deane was surprised and delighted to win the award, and said that it was wonderful to be recognised for doing work that he loves so much.

"I first came to Gunnedah on Australia Day in 1982," Dr Deane said, "and since that time I have become a part of the community and the community has become a part of me.

“Working as a rural GP is an incredibly rewarding career – you are with your patients through all stages of their lives and share their moments of greatest joy, such as when you deliver a baby, through to their times of greatest heartache, like when they lose a child at young age or in tragic circumstances.

“Every day holds a surprise. When a patient walks through the door either at the surgery or in the Emergency Department, you never know what problem they will be bringing to you and because of this your work is always varied and interesting.

Dr Deane said he did not come from a rural background, but became interested in agriculture when he attended James Ruse Agricultural High School in Sydney, and then after deciding to study medicine was attracted to rural practice when he took a placement at West Wyalong.

“I was completing my training at North Shore Hospital and was felt like I was being pushed into a career as a surgeon,” Dr Deane said.

“I wasn’t really that keen on it, and so in my third year took the placement in West Wyalong and fell in love with both GP and country practice. From that moment on I was dedicated to becoming the best country GP I could be.

“I worked to gain my advanced skills training in Obstetrics, General Surgery and Anaesthetics, and spent time working for World Vision in a refugee camp on the Thai/Cambodian border. There were 30,000 refugees in a 3km square area, and it was true bush medicine, in a very concentrated way. I have also spent time working with refugees on the Papua New Guinea border, as well as in the Tanzanian hinterland as a bush doctor.

“I met my wife Karen, in Thailand, who is a nurse from the USA, and after we were married in Bangkok, we came to Gunnedah where I worked first as a locum, and then was offered a partnership in the local practice here.

“We have loved living in Gunnedah ever since. It is a great place for a family, and we raised and educated all four of our children here – and I’m proud to say that they are all now tertiary educated and successful in their own fields.

Dr Deane said that any medical student should consider becoming a rural GP, as it is a career that allows you to provide the best, holistic health care a doctor could ever hope for.

“Working in a country practice gives you the opportunity to use your knowledge, intelligence and ability to help not only your patients, but your whole town. When you treat a patient, you are giving back not only to them, but also to the community they come from.

“It is a unique and highly rewarding vocation that is varied and demanding, and all these years later, I still believe it was the best career choice I could have ever made,” Dr Deane said.

Westpac’s National Head of Healthcare, Craig Anderson, said Westpac was again proud to support RDAA and its award-winners in 2011.

“Westpac is delighted to support the recognition of dedicated individuals to improving rural and remote health and their outstanding achievements and commitment. Westpac has a long history of supporting communities and important works. We see the RDAA and the work of rural doctors and care givers as being as important as any we currently support. It is imperative that we work together to ensure continued investment in rural services that sustain healthy economies in regional and rural areas. Westpac looks forward to continuing to provide support to RDAA, its members and rural communities across Australia.”

Media interviews with Dr Paul Mara and Dr Graham Deane are available.

A photo of Dr Deane is also available.

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