

Saturday 21 October 2023

## Two year plan leads to 35 years' service – and major Award – for SA rural doctor

A dedicated Rural Generalist doctor who recently retired after serving the SA rural community of Crystal Brook for 35 years – and has been a passionate advocate for saving rural maternity services across the state from downgrade or closure – has received the RDAA Rural Doctor of the Year Award for 2023.

**Dr Richard Mackinnon** was presented with the Award at the Rural Medicine Australia (RMA23) conference dinner in Hobart on Friday night.

Presented annually by the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), the Award recognises a rural doctor who has provided exceptional service to their community, as well as outstanding advocacy and leadership for the profession of Rural Medicine.



**RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski, said:** “When Richard applied for a position at the local general practice in Crystal Brook 35 years ago, he only planned to stay for a year or two – but just before arriving to take up the position, the existing doctor told him that he was selling up and moving on. Consequently, Richard ended up becoming the new practice owner...all in the space of a few months!

“Richard’s decision to continue with the move to Crystal Brook couldn’t have worked out better for the local community – as he was a dedicated Rural Generalist doctor there for more than three decades.

“His general practice grew from being only two doctors, to now having more than 10 GPs (which includes 3 registrars)...as well as a second practice in Crystal Brook and another in nearby Laura.

“In addition to providing General Practice care, he also provided on-call Obstetrics, Anaesthetics, Surgery and Emergency Care for that entire period.

“Richard has been a strong advocate for retaining procedural services in rural communities, and was instrumental in establishing regular theatre days at the local hospital – this enabled the retention of Obstetric services in Crystal Brook.

“He has also attracted many specialists to his practice, including a resident Gastroenterologist, which is no small feat for a rural community.

“Over the decades he was a central figure in the fight by the Rural Doctors Association of South Australia (RDASA) and South Australia’s rural communities to save rural maternity units across the state from being closed by the SA Government and the threat from rising Medical Indemnity costs. His commitment and efforts were greatly appreciated by the many communities that stood to be impacted, and by his rural medical colleagues across SA.

“Richard’s leadership in Rural Medicine over many years continues to impact today. His contribution as a Founding member and initial Vice President of RDASA, Founding member of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), and Chair of SA’s Rural Doctors Workforce Agency for 15 years – in addition to numerous other roles – has been immense.

“While Richard may have retired from Medicine, he continues his strong commitment to the community of Crystal Brook. Among many community roles, he’s Chair of a local not-for-profit organisation building affordable accommodation for aged residents in the area. He’s also Commodore of the Royal Port Pirie Yacht Club and President of the Crystal Brook Golf Club (where he can be regularly found outdoors on a lawnmower keeping the club’s fairways tidy). He also has a longstanding commitment to his local church.

**Dr Mackinnon said:** “I am very honoured to receive this Award. I am so lucky to have been nominated for this from a pool of so many rural doctors around the country, doing exactly what I do. It really is a team effort, and I would like to acknowledge the colleagues I work with, and the support I have received over many years from my family and friends. I am truly blessed to have been led to this vocation, and in turn am pleased that I have been able to enhance the wellbeing of my rural community.”

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**Dr Richard Mackinnon is available for interview.**

**A photo of Richard is available by [clicking here](#).**

**A photo of Richard at the Awards night (holding his Award certificate) is available on request.**

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