

12 October 2023

## Rural health high on political agenda

### Key Ministers to attend peak rural medicine conference

Rural Medicine Australia 2023

18-21 October, Hobart

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**Rural health is firmly on the political agenda, with key health ministers committed to attending Rural Medicine Australia 23 (RMA23), Australia's largest gathering of rural doctors, next week.**

**Dr Megan Belot, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA)** which co-hosts the conference, said that since the pandemic there had been a greater recognition of the importance of rural medical care by state and federal politicians.

"We are excited to have both **Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health, Hon Emma McBride, and Shadow Minister for Health, Hon Anne Ruston**, providing keynote addresses at RMA23," Dr Belot said.

"From a local perspective we will have **Tasmanian Minister for Health, Guy Barnett** addressing the conference, and we are extremely excited to have the **Tasmanian Rural Generalist Pathway as our Platinum Partner** this year.

"The rollout of the National Rural Generalist Pathway is the most exciting thing to happen in rural health for a long time, and it is great to have the state teams join and support us in delivering this peak event," Dr Belot said.

"The Tasmanian Government is leading the country in progressing the new Single Employer Model (SEM) for general practice trainees, with strong interest shown from this year's applicants. The SEM provides continuity around employment conditions and entitlements which has not previously been available for general practice trainees. We think SEM could play an important part in improving the attractiveness of rural generalist training across the other states as well.

"After what felt like years in the wilderness rural health has been firmly on the agenda of both sides of government since the pandemic highlighted just how important, and how vulnerable, the rural medical workforce is.

"The challenges of continuing to deliver health care across both the primary and secondary sectors, largely by the same cohort of medical professionals – whether that be doctors, nurses or others – has resulted in a far greater understanding of both the amazing resilience of those providing care, but also the fragility of the workforce as a whole.

“It has been a great relief for rural doctors to see this critically overdue shift in understanding from both a state and federal government level, on just how urgently policy change is needed to support the existing workforce and to help build the workforce of the future,” Dr Belot said.

**Dr Dan Halliday, President of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM)** which co-hosts RMA23 with RDAA, said that the policy aspect of the conference extended well beyond just having politicians attend.

“Rural doctors are keenly interested in the policy framework affecting the recruitment, training and retention of rural doctors, no matter where they are in their career,” Dr Halliday said.

“With up to 1000 rural doctors, trainees, medical students and others expected to attend, RMA23 presents the best opportunity all year for doctors to hear the latest developments, and have input into recommendations that will be progressed by ACRRM and RDAA over the coming year.

“With a stellar keynote line-up; a strong program of clinical skills sessions and workshops; individualised streams aimed at rural doctors, junior doctors and medical students; the latest research in Rural Medicine; sessions focused on the hot topics affecting the rural medical sector and the health of rural communities... RMA23 features the who’s who and the what’s what of rural medicine.

“As an official pre-event for WONCA World Conference 23 (the global conference for GPs and family doctors, which will be held in Sydney the following week), we are expecting a larger than usual number of international delegates,” Dr Halliday said.

“This is an exciting opportunity to showcase the fantastic research on rural health being done here in Australia, and exploring the common issues affecting primary healthcare across the globe with our international colleagues.”

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**Media are welcome to attend most sessions at RMA23, but must pre-register in advance by contacting one of the RMA Media Team on the contact numbers below.**

Find the program for RMA23 by [clicking here](#)

Find the full keynote speaker list for RMA23 by [clicking here](#)

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