

Rural Doctors' Association NSW
Media release
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Christmas brings new leadership for NSW rural doctors



The new President of the Rural Doctors Association of NSW (RDANSW) has called on the NSW Government to ensure that the rural General Practice sector is engaged and consulted in planning and implementation of the Single Employer Model across NSW.

Dr Rachel Christmas – a Rural Generalist doctor in Temora – has hit the ground running since being elected as RDANSW President at its recent AGM, replacing outgoing President, Dr Charles Evill.

“After being RDANSW Vice-President over the past three years, I have a very good understanding of the areas that RDANSW needs to focus on in 2024” she said.

“At our recent ‘The Future of Rural Health’ Forum – held as part of the NSW Rural GPs Conference – we engaged with nurses, practice managers, rural health leaders, rural doctors and other stakeholders.

“We have an amazing army of dedicated people involved in rural health who are keen to see it thrive! The wheels are in motion already for positive change to attract and retain the rural medical workforce in NSW, including different remuneration options, a review of credentialling processes, increasing rural placements for junior doctors, collaborative care models, and many other projects.

“The further rollout of a Single Employer Model has real potential to draw more junior doctors into rural General Practice, by enabling them to retain the employment benefits they have accrued during their years of training in the public hospital system when they move into private sector General Practice to train as GPs or Rural Generalists. What we need to do is to get this model right, to ensure junior doctors and general practices are well supported to make this new approach work to its full potential.

“We also know that not everyone gets the opportunity to experience what a rural lifestyle has to offer, so we want to make sure that as many medical students and junior doctors as possible get that exposure early in their university years and medical careers. This is an important time when people are meeting their partner, considering purchasing their first home and starting a family. You can’t be what you can’t see! So let’s make it easier to go rural and stay rural!”

Dr Christmas will be supported in her new role by the other RDANSW Committee members:

- ♣ Dr Alam Yoosuff (Finley)- Vice President
- ♣ Dr Charles Evill, Ex-Officio / Past President
- ♣ Dr Ian Kamerman (Tamworth) - Secretary
- ♣ Dr John Curnow (Jindabyne)– Treasurer

Committee Members - Dr Claire Cupitt (Locum), Dr Sue Velovski, (Lismore), Dr Jean Littlewood (Wellington), Dr Anne-Marie Aubin (Taree), Dr Naomi Clements (Newcastle).



New to the RDA NSW Committee this year are Dr Clements (pictured above left) and Dr Aubin (pictured above right). Dr Clements hopes to find her way back to rural areas, after undertaking her initial training in metro hospitals. Dr Aubin has been inspired to get more involved in the association after attending the Rural Medicine Australia conference held recently in Hobart.

As well as providing GP services in Temora, Dr Christmas also provides VMO on-call services in Obstetrics and general in-patient medical care at the local hospital.

"I got involved with the RDANSW Committee in 2017 when Temora's operative obstetric services at the local hospital were threatened to be shut down" she said. "With RDANSW's support to raise the issue with the then NSW Health Minister, and urgent communications between the Local Health District and other stakeholders, we were able to reverse this decision and, as a result, we continue to deliver babies safely in Temora."

RDANSW is fully funded by its members (all of whom are rural doctors) and has represented and advocated on behalf of its membership, their rural communities and the field of Rural Medicine since 1987.

Dr Christmas said she looks forward to the challenge that the President's role will offer and encourages all rural doctors to join and support the Association.

"Being involved in the Rural Doctors Association is extremely important" she said. "It's the only organisation that exclusively represents NSW rural doctors in fee negotiations, which in turn directly impacts on the number of doctors who choose to work in rural and remote NSW – and consequently also determines the access to care that is available for rural and remote patients across the state. Our membership of, and contribution to, the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) also gives us a strong voice in the Federal sphere."

Dr Christmas paid tribute to outgoing President, Dr Charles Evill, who has led the Association for 4 years.

"Charles has been an incredible leader for our Association, and his commitment and devotion to NSW rural doctors over so many years has been highly appreciated" she said.

Available for interview:

RDANSW President, Dr Rachel Christmas
RDANSW Immediate Past President, Dr Charles Evill

Media Contact:

Alicia Hargreaves on 0407 643 935