

Rural docs welcome new script for rural health

THE immediate past president of RDAQ Dr Adam Coltzau has welcomed today's announcement by Health Minister Lawrence Springborg to build a Rural and Remote Framework that will establish baseline medical services across Queensland. Speaking to more than 200 rural doctors at this weekend's RDAQ annual conference in Mackay, Mr Springborg said the "minimum service model" would deliver levels of care matched to community needs.

Mr Springborg offered a guarantee that services would only be maintained or enhanced under the plan and not downgraded or closed.

"Small, nurse led facilities in places like Morven, through to larger rural facilities which conduct a range of more specialised services, will be included in the framework," Mr Springborg said.

"This will be the foundation of bringing back services and building on community needs. From today, Queenslanders and clinicians will have a direct say in the creation of better local health services, under a new consultation framework.

Mr Springborg also paid tribute to the work of former RDAQ president and Theodore GP Dr Bruce Chater, who led the design of the Rural and Remote Framework plan via his role as chair of the Statewide Rural Remote Clinical Network, a group appointed by the Health Minister last year to draft new policy settings for rural health care across Queensland.

Dr Ewen McPhee, former RDAQ president and Emerald GP, is also on the panel.

"I come from a rural area and I understand the importance of getting rural health right," Mr Springborg said. My thinking and that of the RDAQ's are basically in sync."

Dr Coltzau said his organisation welcomed the plan but would be seeking more detail in coming weeks.

"We want to know what those minimums are going to be and we want to make sure there is a collaborative approach to set those minimum frameworks that will work on the ground and in the best interests of those communities where they are established," he said.

"We want to make sure that it is, in fact, a maximum standard that is delivered for rural Queensland.

"We would hope that the collaboration to deliver this framework will involve rural doctors, the communities involved and government officers in a spirit of cooperation and open dialogue."

Mr Springborg also announced plans to re-open birthing units at Weipa and Cooktown now that maternity services at Beaudesert Hospital were on track to be fully restored by July next year.

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