



Rural Doctors Association of Victoria Media release

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Rural hospitals a vital link in the emergency chain

Rural hospitals and rural doctors play a vital role in providing critical emergency and on-call care, and the recent serious incident involving a patient at Kyneton Hospital has highlighted the importance of maintaining these facilities.

Dr Mike Moynihan, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Victoria (RDAV), said that the controversy surrounding the handling of a patient with a life-threatening haemorrhage has again demonstrated that hospital standards must be established and enforced in order to ensure adequate emergency and on-call services are available in rural areas.

“This is not an isolated incident, and Kyneton is not a small town”, Dr Moynihan said.

“There is a local population of 10,000 and a wider population of up to 40,000 covered by the local Health Service.

“Services in many small towns have been greatly reduced in the last 20 years. We do not want to see this happen in medium sized hospitals such as Kyneton as well.”

Dr Moynihan said that it was inevitable that areas such as Kyneton which service a relatively large population, would generate a greater number of emergency situations.

“The hospital does have access to local doctors with the necessary skills to respond to these situations” Dr Moynihan said.

“The hospital receives funding to employ these doctors as Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs).

“There are about 500 VMOs throughout Victoria and many of these rural doctors have advanced procedural skills in areas such as anaesthetics, obstetrics and emergency medicine, providing a vital service to their communities.”

Dr Moynihan noted that Kyneton had been the subject of much media coverage over

the past year. This included observations that ambulances were bypassing the hospital, and that mothers were travelling from the town to give birth in Melbourne.

“The ambulance provides an extremely valuable service but it cannot be expected to replace skilled doctors who are working in a well equipped and maintained hospital,” Dr Moynihan said.

“RDAV calls on the Minister and the Department to reaffirm their support for rural hospitals and rural doctors, and to intervene to ensure the appropriate services are provided from Kyneton and other rural hospitals”

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