

Friday 1 February 2013

Rural doctors want commitments before Federal election

Rural doctors are seeking commitment from both the Government and the Opposition on their support for rural medical services.

Dr Sheilagh Cronin, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), said that there is now eight months for both sides of government to commit to maintaining and increasing their support to ensure a viable future for rural General Practice and rural procedural medical services.

“Rural doctors have been unanimous in their call for a change to the current ASGC-RA system that determines the level of support offered to doctors practising in rural areas,” Dr Cronin said.

“We have asked again and again for a complete overhaul or change of the system since it was announced more than three years ago, but so far our calls have fallen on deaf ears.

“With the election now announced, it is an opportunity for both sides of Government to show us they are listening to the feedback from the coal face, and reviewing this system that is proving so unequitable for many rural areas.

RDAA is also requesting a commitment to maintain or increase support for rural medical services through a continuation of the current incentives.

“The recent infrastructure grants have made a real difference to a rural medical practice’s ability to upgrade or replace out-dated facilities. However recent cuts to PIP payments will threaten the viability of some rural medical practices “Dr Cronin said.

“Rural medical practices are the one-stop-health-shop for many rural towns that have no other local medical facilities available to them.

“It is essential for the health and welfare of rural communities that government continue to support these practices that provide the high level of care so needed at an economic cost to the practice.

“This is a golden opportunity for the Government and Opposition to demonstrate how important rural communities are in the lead-up to the September election and we call on them to announce their support for these initiatives,” Dr Cronin said.

Dr Sheilagh Cronin is available for interview.

Media contacts: Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638.