

RURAL DOCTORS ASSOCIATION (NSW) INC

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Doctors commend Area Health Service for prompt action on Coolah Hospital concerns

The Rural Doctors Association of NSW (RDA NSW) has commended the Greater Western Area Health Service (GWAHS) for its prompt action in returning emergency and acute care services to Coolah Hospital and taking the hospital off bypass.

RDA NSW warned last Wednesday that—in shutting down the hospital’s emergency department and acute care beds, and placing the hospital on bypass—lives would be put at risk with critical and acute care patients being forced to travel or be transported to distant hospitals for treatment.

Vice President of RDA NSW, Dr Tilak Dissanayake—who has been Coolah’s solo doctor for the past 8 years—said he was very pleased with GWAHS’ prompt response to RDA NSW’s concerns.

“GWAHS’ Director of Clinical Governance, Sue-Anne Redmond, rang me late last week to confirm that Coolah Hospital’s services would be back to normal today, and indeed they are” he said.

“Coolah Hospital’s emergency department is once again fully operational and all acute beds are again available, which is terrific news for local patients and the local community in general.

“We commend GWAHS on responding so quickly on this issue.

“While we will keep a close eye on the situation at Coolah Hospital in the weeks ahead, we are greatly encouraged by the prompt action that GWAHS has taken over the past few days in returning the hospital to its normal capacity.”

Coolah is an isolated, single doctor town in north-west NSW. It is 1.5 hours drive from Dubbo Base Hospital and 2 hours drive from Tamworth Base Hospital. Coolah Hospital services a population of over 2000 people, and from July to October an average of 125 emergency patients presented at the hospital each month.

RDA NSW warned last week that putting Coolah Hospital on bypass would cause great difficulty for many local patients—particularly those who are aged and have limited resources—in getting to distant hospitals.

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