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Rural Health Matters!

Doctors call for long and short-term action on rural health in Federal Election Priorities

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has launched its *Federal Election Priorities 2025: Rural Health Matters*, which aims to give rural Australians better access to medical services, more local health services and less waiting times.

RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski, said the organisation's five point plan would deliver both short and long term benefits.

"Rural Australians are tired of waiting," Dr Lewandowski said.

"They are tired of waiting to see a doctor. Tired of travelling for every single specialist visit. Tired of losing hospital services due to simple problems such as outdated air-conditioning. Tired of waiting for the government to actually fix these issues.



"What rural communities need and want when it comes to health services is simple: **better access to medical services; more local health services; less waiting times.**

"The rural GP shortage is real. The shortage of consultant specialists in rural areas is even worse. Existing rural medical facilities need upgrades. Mums and dads who are doctors and nurses in rural communities need help to be able to stay in the workforce. And a really good plan for the future is essential to actually addressing this long term.

"Our election priorities deal with these issues and would provide not only the short-term help needed to improve access to health care, but also integrate into a longer-term plan."

RDAA has presented a five point plan:

- 1. Train more rural doctors**
- 2. Get more specialists**
- 3. Build more workspaces**
- 4. Help medical parents stay in the workforce**
- 5. Plan for the future**

Train more rural doctors

"The Commonwealth has been investing in Rural Generalist training and this needs to keep happening," Dr Lewandowski said.

“The number of rural training positions needs to be increased by 200, and the current investment, which has been highly successful, needs to be made into a long-term commitment.

Get more specialists

“The shortage of rural specialists means patients have to travel or be retrieved which costs a fortune to the health system and to patients and their families. Rural consultant specialists need access to the same supports as rural GPs, and we need to reform the Specialist Training Program (STP) into something that actually works, because right now, it doesn’t,” Dr Lewandowski said.

Build more workspaces

“GP clinics and rural hospitals need some grants to be able to increase their training capacity, and deliver the multidisciplinary care that everyone agrees is needed. Rural and remote hospitals also need grants for minor upgrades to their facilities that would enable them to maintain or expand their services. At the moment these changes are simply unaffordable for most small facilities and Commonwealth infrastructure grants would go a long way to helping this.”

Help parents stay in the workforce

“Limited or no childcare in rural towns results in many doctors and nurses having no choice but to relocate into regional centres if they want to be able to return to work. RDAA proposes a pilot program to develop commercial childcare facilities on rural hospital grounds,” Dr Lewandowski said.

Plan for the future

“A National Rural Health Strategy, coordinated by the National Rural Health Commissioner, is needed to enable outcomes from the recent reviews to be considered in the rural context and progressed in ways that actually work in real rural communities.

“Investment into these key targeted areas will help address the very urgent need for improved access to care for rural Australians as well as build the foundation for longer term sustainable investment to increase access and build a sustainable medical workforce for rural and remote Australia,” Dr Lewandowski said.

[You can read the RDAA Election Priorities here.](#)

A high resolution photo of Dr RT Lewandowski is [available here](#).

Available for interview:

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