Greens commit while major parties are ‘Lost in Space’ on rural health

In the final days before the Federal Election, rural doctors are saying the only party that has so far addressed rural health issues is the Greens.

Dr Adam Coltzau, President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) said that The Greens had really stepped up to the mark, while the other major parties were very disappointing on rural health.

“Out of all the parties, the Greens are the only one that have issued a meaningful policy position on rural health,” Dr Coltzau said.

“They have committed to minimum standards of service access, promised the development of a rural health workforce innovation fund, to look at increasing the rural and remote bulk billing payment and $180 million in infrastructure and increased MBS payments to help deliver care to the bush.

“We sincerely thank Greens Leader Richard Di Natale for his ongoing support and willingness to listen to RDAA on rural health issues.

“As for the other parties, they remain ‘Lost in Space’ on rural health,” Dr Coltzau said.

“Neither Labor nor Liberal have promised any significant investment to rural health workforce issues, with the maldistribution of doctors a key problem impacting on rural patients’ ability to access care.

“We continue to call for a rural loading on all consults delivered in the bush, which would build in a financial incentive for both GP and specialist services, to help offset the higher cost of delivering care to rural and remote Australia.

“This mechanism would also provide encouragement for specialists to leave their city practice and provide visiting services to rural towns,” Dr Coltzau said.
Other areas RDAA is calling for investment in are:

- Improvements to the General Practice Rural Incentives Program (GPRIP) to provide support payments to rural doctors that reflect not only the remoteness of the location in which each doctor works, but also the level of skills and extent of services that the doctor delivers.
- A revamped Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund, that supports health services and general practices that have a track-record in training rural doctors, is needed to increase their capacity to train more.
- Specific supports for rural hospitals and to support rural birthing units.

A high resolution photo of Dr Adam Coltzau is available here

Available for interview: RDAA President-Elect, Dr Adam Coltzau (via contacts below)
RDAA CEO, Peta Rutherford (via contacts below)

Media contacts: Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638 (Thursday / Friday)
Patioc Daley on 0408 004 890
RDAA National Office on 02 6239 7730