

MEDIA RELEASE

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Beechworth GP honoured

The 2009 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards acknowledged Beechworth GP Dr Wendy Connor for her commitment to the region, at a ceremony in Melbourne on the weekend.

Dr Connor received an award for her Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities.

Victorian rural doctors were nominated by their peers, patients and local community members in three categories, *35 Years Service to Rural Communities*, for *Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities* or as a *New Rural Doctor*.

Health Minister, Hon. Daniel Andrews presented the doctors and their families with the awards in front of 225 guests at a gala dinner.

Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) chief executive Claire Austin explains the Awards' significance.

"The Awards provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on the contributions that our doctors and their families make to Victoria.

"Additionally, the Awards offer Victorians a way of saying 'thanks' to a corner stone of the population that sustain local communities in so many ways," Ms Austin said.

The 2009 Award recipients were from all corners of the state, Ballarat, Sale, St Leonards, Moe, Elmore, Lorne, Ouyen, Traralgon, Mount Beauty, Wangaratta, Portland, Lakes Entrance, Benalla, Phillip Island, Traralgon and Camperdown.

RWAV chairman Dr Philip Webster also paid tribute to this year's recipients.

"As is the nature of general practice and medicine these contributions have been diverse and broad ranging.

"Amongst all the recipients honoured, the common thread was doctors sustaining their local community," Dr Webster said.

An awards panel comprising RWAV, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Australian College of Rural & Remote Medicine, Rural Doctors Association of Victoria Australian Medical Association Vic and Rural Medical Family Network representatives assessed nominees against the criteria for each of the categories.

The Awards were proudly sponsored by Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA), a statutory body established to provide risk management consultancy, insurance and site risk surveys to Victorian State Government departments and agencies.

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Background information

Dr Wendy Connor, Beechworth – for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities

“I think that I have always known that I wanted to work in a rural or remote setting. Now, more than 20 years later, my real hope is still that everyday I can contribute something positive to someone’s life,” Dr Connor said.

As a student I spent an elective working with the RFDS in the Kimberly. I enjoyed it so much, I set about structuring my training as a young doctor to equip myself to work in a rural environment.

My working life began in 1983 as an intern at the Geelong Hospital. The very first rotation I did was at Colac Hospital, so my direction towards work in a small country town practice was set.

It was 1989 when my partner, Rik, and I moved to North East Victoria. We had just returned from a year in Africa and, although we had both grown up in Melbourne, life in the city was not part of our plan. So we went to Beechworth for six months, just to give it a try. More than twenty years later we are still living here!

The true benefit of practising in a small town is cumulative over the years. Getting to know your community, families and individuals is priceless. It’s much more than consulting in a clinic or managing patients in the local hospital.

My decision a few years ago to do voluntary work in East Timor has led to a special friendship between Indigo Shire and Atauro Island in East Timor. Amongst other things, we have raised money to fund a malnutrition relief program for the children. Last year I was proud to receive an Australia Day Award from Indigo Shire for my contribution to the community. But what astounds me more is the pride that my patients have in the work I do in Timor, even if it means I am not available to see them when they might require it.

That sort of respect makes serving a rural community very rewarding indeed.

Nomination information available on request.

About RWAV – Rural Workforce Agency Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation working with communities that have underserved health needs. We do this through a number of initiatives that recruit, support and advocate for the health workforce throughout rural and regional Victoria. rwav.com.au