

MEDIA RELEASE

12 May 2009

Benalla GP honoured

The 2009 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards acknowledged former Benalla GP Dr Geoff Patience for his commitment to the region, at a ceremony in Melbourne on the weekend.

Dr Patience received an award for his 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 including, Ballarat, Sale, St Leonards, Moe, Elmore, Lorne, Ouyen, Trafalgar, Mount Beauty, Beechworth, Wangaratta, Portland, Lakes Entrance, 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 Geoff Patience, Benalla – for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities

“I guess I’m what they call a typical old style country doctor. I worked in country Victoria for nearly 30 years and have found the professional and personal rewards to be very satisfying,” Dr Patience said.

“I commenced practice in Benalla in 1971.

“I chose rural practice because I was raised in Gippsland and, after a comprehensive four-year post graduate training, it seemed a logical way to best use all of my skills.

“Fortunately, I joined Dr Henry Horne - an inspirational GP already in Benalla - and from there we built up a five partner general practice. Not only were we clinically diverse, we taught senior medical students from Monash and Melbourne Universities as well as GP Registrars for their FRACGP training.

“All these factors contributed to my enthusiasm for general practice in a rural setting. Combined with the ability to do proceduralist work like midwifery and caesarean sections, minor surgery, appendicectomies, anaesthetics and emergency medicine, the whole professional experience has been interesting clinically and very worthwhile for the results we’ve achieved for our patients.

“The messages I’d like to give those seeking a career in rural general practice are simple. Initially, I’d encourage you to obtain a good training especially in anaesthetics and manipulative obstetrics. You should also thoroughly understand the practice you plan to join by getting a feeling for the practice and the staff - prior to taking up a Registrar’s position, go and interview the practice principals. Having a passion for living in a rural community and being involved in extra medical activities is also vital. And, finally, but very importantly, involve your partner in the decision to live in a rural community.

“My life as a rural GP has been enormously satisfying and rewarding. I only hope that I’ve been able to make a difference to my community and my patients.”

Nomination information available upon 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