

MEDIA RELEASE

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Camperdown GP honoured

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

Dr Stewart 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 including, Ballarat, Sale, St Leonards, Moe, Elmore, Lorne, Ouyen, Trafalgar, Mount Beauty, Beechworth, Wangaratta, Portland, Lakes Entrance, Benalla, Phillip Island and Traralgon.

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 Ruth Stewart, Camperdown – For Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities

“I often ask myself: where did I go right? A career as a rural doctor, wife and mother is rewarding, invigorating, joyful, humbling and empowering. Aren’t I blessed?”

I have tried to work out when I first thought, “I want to be a doctor.” I certainly know that I was young. It may have been when I was playing doctors and nurses with the boy from across the road. But surely my career ambition can’t stem from the pure rage I felt when he told me that girls can’t be doctors. Or can it?

Growing up, I adored our family doctor. He treated my family and even removed my appendix “just before they burst.” He saved my life! He was a hero. I wanted to be just like him.

I completed my MBBS in Melbourne in 1985 and then had a stint in Glasgow working in Obstetrics. I moved to Camperdown in 1989 and since then have worked, as well as in General Practice, across a range of positions - as a VMO at South Western Health Camperdown Campus and at Toorang and Mortlake Hospitals, and Timboon District Health Services. Specifically, I have enjoyed Obstetric visiting privileges.

I have gained qualifications in Obstetrics, Family Medicine and have trained in Colposcopy. I am a PhD candidate with Flinders University. In 1999 I was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine. And, I have long been actively involved on a variety of medical and community boards and committees.

I’ve also worked in Ethiopia and Arnhem Land and in 2005 undertook a Rotary International Study Exchange to Argentina. And these days, I am an Associate Professor of Medicine at Deakin University.

So here I am. A rural procedural doctor, a wife, a mother, a medico-politician, a student. This isn’t just one life I’m leading, it’s a handful. It’s wonderful!

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