

MEDIA RELEASE

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Phillip Island GP honoured

The 2009 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards acknowledged Phillip Island GP Dr Allan Powles for his commitment to the region, at a ceremony in Melbourne on the weekend.

Dr Powles 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, Ballarat, Sale, St Leonards, Moe, Elmore, Lorne, Ouyen, Trafalgar, Mount Beauty, Beechworth, Wangaratta, Portland, Lakes Entrance, Benalla, 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 Allan Powles, Phillip Island – for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities

Nomination information available on request.

“I never had any real interest in any other form of medicine bar rural practice with its wide ranging work options ... I could not have had a better life,” Dr Powles said.

Coming from a small country town in central Victoria, with many of my family on farming properties, I was always very keen to get back to the country. My objective was to not only to work as a rural GP, but, if possible, to start farming myself - even if on a limited basis.

I finished university, including stints in Nagambie and Warragul, in December 1979, and I went straight to Geelong Hospital for three years. At this stage, Geelong was very much into training for general practice, especially rural general practice.

After this, I worked in some city practices, as well as an isolated solo GP in the New Guinea Highlands, then got my first job on Phillip Island in January 1984. I took leave to do more obstetrics training in the UK for seven months and completed the Diploma of Obstetrics.

I came back and been here ever since - over 25 years in total. Phillip Island was ideal for me and my family from the start.

Along the way, I've learnt some valuable lessons about rural practice. Medically, you are quite isolated. If there is a retained placenta you dealt with it, if there was a PPH you dealt with it, if there was a child with meningitis you dealt with it.

The next lesson I've learnt is the importance of keeping a good work/life balance. You are on call and working long hours. Support for rural doctors is paramount.

I have been blessed to live and work here, the things I have seen and done will live with me all my life. I would recommend what I have done to anyone.

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