

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Sale doctors honoured for their service**

The 2009 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards acknowledged Sale doctors Ian Miller and Iain Nicolson for their commitment to the region, at a ceremony in Melbourne on the weekend.

Doctor Iain Miller received an award for Outstanding Contribution and GP Dr Iain Nicolson for 35 Years Service 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, St Leonards, Moe, Elmore, Lorne, Ouyen, Traralgon, Mount Beauty, Beechworth, 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 Iain Miller, Sale** – recognised for his Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities

I attended medical school in London and qualified with an MBBS in 1969. Following house officer jobs I entered surgical training, gaining FRCS in 1976.

I came to Australia on the first of January 1977, with my wife Ann and two small children to join a medical practice in Sale. The advertisement in the British Medical Journal called for a doctor who could stand in on the surgical roster, do some General Practice and help out the local Gynaecologist. For the first three years in Sale I did just this.

I then passed the FRACS so that I could work as a Specialist General Surgeon – I've been in Sale ever since.

Professionally, I have become very involved in treating Breast Cancer and have been part of establishing the BreastScreen program in Gippsland and then Regional Integrated Cancer Services in Victoria.

These two programs have brought huge benefits to country women with breast cancer and also people with cancers generally. There have been proper pathways of care established through Cancer Care Nurses and Breast Care Nurses, which has benefited these patients greatly. On top of that there are spin offs with radiation therapy in Gippsland, which again has meant people no longer have to go to Melbourne for radiation oncology.

Apart from the great satisfaction of my medical practice in the country, I also have at my doorstep my other passions of fishing, sailing and bushwalking. I also feel that bringing up children in the country has had a lot of advantages. Being with them as they grew up and working with my wife (she is also a doctor) have been wonderful experiences.

The message I would give to anybody looking towards rural medicine as a career is that it is immensely satisfying and fulfilling. I know how much it has meant to me.

*"I was brought up in the English countryside. In many ways my childhood was idyllic - I always wanted to return to the country," Dr Miller said.*

## **Dr Iain Nicolson, Sale** – Recognised for 35 Years Service to Rural Communities

In October 1974 I commenced a new career in general practice after several years of service in HM Forces. My first position was as a FMP trainee with a delightful group of doctors in the rural /coastal area of Sussex in the South of England.

Yet life in the late 70's in the UK was, to my mind a little predictable and, combined with the weather, a bit depressing. I had served in Malaysia, Singapore, Germany and Cyprus and Caryl, my wife had also served in Singapore and Cyprus. We both looked for a more interesting life.

In 1977 I received an invitation from the then Victorian Government to take up a position in rural Victoria, so I applied for a position in Toora - a township of 600 people with a small bush nursing hospital. I was to be the only doctor.

Townpeople, although mixed on the benefits of having a Pommy doctor as opposed to no doctor, were welcoming and helpful and during eight years there we made many friends.

After a bout of personal injury in 1984 (thanks to an over exuberant calf) it was time to move on. I relocated to the much larger City of Sale to work in a small group practice. I curtailed some aspects of practice notably obstetrics and anaesthetics and enhanced others e.g. medico-legal work and pre-employment services. I also increased my involvement in disaster recovery and became involved with St John Ambulance in the delivery of volunteer First Aid services which I still very much enjoy.

I continue to enjoy rural medical practice and the privilege of being allowed into patients' private lives to help where I can. I enjoy the fresh bunch of medical students each year with their hopes and aspirations and I have hope that the future will bring students with ambitions to become rural GPs.

*"I am fortunate doing a job that I enjoy, working with excellent staff, living in peace on my few acres, 'stressing' about the relative productivity of my chooks and being surrounded by a supportive family," Dr Nicolson said.*

**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](http://rwav.com.au)