

MEDIA RELEASE

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Traralgon doctor honoured for service

The 2009 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards acknowledged Traralgon GP Dr Neville Steer for his commitment to the region, at a ceremony in Melbourne on the weekend.

Dr Steer 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, Phillip Island 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 Neville Steer, Traralgon – for Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities

“I grew up on a farm at Bordertown in South Australia. So, it was a close decision for me between farming and medicine.

“Dr David Ramsay was our family doctor and he has continued as one of the local GPs – he is still very well respected for the care he provides to the community. I also enjoyed a stint while training with Dr Jeff Baker at Balaklava, north of Adelaide. Both very inspirational men.

“I commenced general practice in Traralgon in August 1983. I met my wife, Alisdair, in the Emergency Department of the local hospital. Alisdair is also a GP and has been steadfast in her support and encouragement of me. A GP-GP marriage is a good combination as there is the ability to debrief and learn from each other.

“I believe it is important for the community to have emotional anchors and seeing the local GP living in the area is one of them. My family has got used to “strangers” talking to their husband/father like old friends.

“Being a doctor for an extended period in the same area brings a great sense of the continuity of care that is the strong point of general practice. Your patients get older with you, they have families, develop relationships, experience loss and grief, they die and the important role of the GP in the community is demonstrated. I have realised that I am a significant part of their families.

“I am committed to the collegial nature of medicine and the tradition of passing skills and knowledge to future generations of doctors. I have great respect for the skills and commitment of GPs. Especially the rural ones,” Dr Steer 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