



MEDIA RELEASE

10 March 2009

Swan Hill Health Services Unite

Swan Hill region communities are set to benefit from an initiative that supports local medical needs and improves access to health service models.

On Saturday March 14 at the Swan Hill Town Hall, medical professionals and representatives from the region will take part in a community focused “roundtable” to strengthen cooperative efforts to reduce health workforce shortages.

Swan Hill District Health Services CEO Ted Rayment said, “The combined community efforts will help sustain and grow our health services with a focus on keeping the Swan Hill region healthy.

“We are putting the health of our community first. Our aim is to collectively attract and retain medical, nursing and allied health staff and to seek out innovative and improved ways to deliver our health services.”

According to the latest GP workforce data, 25 per cent of general practitioners within the Mallee region hope to reduce their working hours within the next five years.

Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) Chief Executive, Claire Austin explains the need for a coordinated approach. “We need to put the communities’ health needs right in the centre of our planning process and develop long term health workforce solutions around these needs.

“No matter what our professional role is, we need to achieve the same thing – better health for our communities.”

Organisations participating in the “roundtable” include Swan Hill Health Service, Robinvale Health Service, Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership, Mallee Division of General Practice, Bendigo Health, Alpine Health, Rural Family Medical Network and Swan Hill Rural City Council, Regional Development Victoria, RWAV and the Department of Human Services.

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Media enquiries:

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About the *Sustainable Practices Project* – the RWAV initiative is supported by community members, businesses and local government. The program aims to address the impact of the drought, a decline in economic activity and GP shortages are having on the availability of health services in the region.

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. www.rwav.com.au