



## Media Release

Monday 26 May 2008

### Gippsland Doctors Honoured for their Service

Gippsland doctors Chris Fielding, Ian Seymour and Hulme Hay were honoured for their commitment to the region at the prestigious, Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) 2008 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards, on Friday night in Melbourne.

Doctor Fielding from Moe and Dr Seymour from Omeo were both recipients of the *35 Years of Service to Rural Communities* and Doctor Hay, from Orbost received an *Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities* award.

Overall there were 32 doctors who won awards which acknowledge the tremendous efforts of Victoria's rural doctors and their spouses for the service and commitment they provide to the region.

Victorian rural doctors were nominated by their peers, patients and local community members in two categories, *35 Years of Service to Rural Communities* or *Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities*.

Minister for Rural & Regional Development, the Hon. Jacinta Allan presented the doctors and their families with the awards at a gala dinner in the National Gallery of Victoria's Great Hall.

Rural Workforce Agency Victoria's (RWAV) Chairman and Mildura General Practitioner, Dr Philip Webster commends the doctors and their families for their commitment to rural Victorians.

"Our annual awards are significant as they're an opportunity to publicly acknowledge and honour our doctors for their dedication to rural Victorians," Dr Webster said.

"More importantly, the doctors provide terrific role models that will inspire and enthuse our medical students to seriously consider a career as a rural GP."

The Awards were attended by 200 guests that included Award recipients and their families, health professionals from all disciplines and medical school students.

Other doctors who received an award herald from Apollo Bay, Ballarat, Mansfield, Wodonga, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Hamilton, Foster, Bendigo, Kerang, Portland, Colac and Mildura.

An awards panel comprising Australian College of Rural & Remote Medicine (ACCRM), RWAV, Rural Medical Family Network (RMFN), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), Committee of Chairmen of Victorian State Committees of Medical Colleges, Rural Doctors Association of Victoria (RDAV) and Australian Medical Association Vic (AMA) representatives assessed each of the nominees against the criteria for each of the categories.

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For high resolution images or to discuss further story ideas please call Samantha Marnell on 0439 551 720.

## **Background information**

### **Dr Chris Fielding**

As a medical student in Middlesex in the 1960s, Chris was also a talented decathlete but a chance conversation in London with a neighbour with family in Victoria led him to general practice in Maffra.

Chris describes this change as initially challenging but one that his wife Meg and 3 children have never regretted.

Following completion of qualifications in Obstetrics and Surgery, Chris has delivered a few “grandchildren” in his time – that is children of the children he’s delivered in the Maffra region.

Over the past six years Chris has extended his services to cover that of caring for the health of his peers through initiating the GP Health Check Program with the community of doctors in the Central West Gippsland Division of General Practice’

Chris reckons being outgoing and gregarious and a willingness to enter fully into local community life are the keys to success.

### **Dr Ian Seymour**

As Ian jokingly says, he is now known as one of Omeo’s “Grumpy Old Docs” due to his involvement in an innovative arrangement where he and 4 other part time GPs each perform 10 week stints in the local clinic.

Much earlier in his career after graduating in 1967, Ian spent a number of years practising in the rural areas of Papua New Guinea.

With a desire to continue providing health services to rural communities, Ian and his wife Wil later settled in Bairnsdale where he eventually became a senior partner.

With an involvement in walnut growing they made the move to Omeo where Ian established his unique system of continuous medical cover for the small remote community - the “Grumpy Old Docs”.

### **Dr Hulme Hay**

Dr Hulme Hay is a GP Obstetrician who has worked for 26 years at the Orbost Medical Clinic and is one of few remaining GP Proceduralists in rural Victoria. He is also a GP anesthetist.

Hulme has worked collaboratively with midwives at Orbost Regional Health to develop a model of care that has improved clinical outcomes for pregnant and birthing women, and has ensured sustainability of this small rural maternity service.

As a solo procedural GP in Orbost, Hulme has fostered inter-professional relationships and supported and assisted midwives in extending their scope of practice in order to create a model of care that ensures every woman has access to a high standard of care throughout the pregnancy & birth continuum, even in his absence.

Workforce shortfalls have forced us to be creative, without Dr Hay’s commitment and dedication to this facility this innovative project would not have seen the light of day.