



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Specialist Service Provision A Success in South Western Victoria**

A specialist medical outreach program providing psychiatric services to south western Victoria has recently celebrated its third anniversary. The services provided by Dr Michael Duke to patients in Portland and Heywood are made possible thanks to the Australian Government funded Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP), administered in Victoria through the Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria (RWAV).

Under the program, specialists visit rural areas, providing access to medical assistance that would otherwise be limited to metropolitan centres.

A Melbourne based general adult psychiatrist, Dr Duke travels each month to Portland and Heywood, where he is also involved in a special area of interest, psychiatry for Indigenous people. As part of his MSOAP duties he works at Heywood's Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation.

"The specialist outreach program is very rewarding," Dr. Duke said. "The feedback I've had from rural doctors is that they receive value from it also, in an educational sense, and by way of assistance."

Dr Duke works closely with the local doctors at a patient-by-patient level and also by holding medical education seminars on topics such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The main benefit, though, is to local people.

"Without this program, patients would have to go a long way to access services – travelling as far as Warrnambool, Ballarat or Geelong for specialist care.

"The challenge is the limited time I have here, particularly if patients need to be seen more than once a month. When we do need that, we need other professionals to help, so I work closely with local psychologists and there are also Aboriginal health workers who I can rely on to help."

Dr Duke, who has a private practice at Hampton and also works at St Vincent's in the city, welcomes the opportunity to travel and work in regional Victoria and it is something he would recommend to others.

"I can highly recommend it, the program in particular and the whole south west part of Victoria generally. It is a lovely place with good people."

**About RWAV**

RWAV was established in 1998 to help overcome the shortage of rural doctors and improve access to medical services for rural Victorians. RWAV's recruitment programs and support services are available for all rural doctors, and include: marketing rural Victoria and rural medicine; marketing vacancies in rural practice; international and local recruitment; family support and locum services; professional development (training and grants) to support doctors moving into rural practice as well as to assist rural doctors to maintain their clinical and professional skills.

In addition, RWAV recruits and supports medical specialist outreach services, and undertakes workforce planning and research to inform government policy. RWAV acknowledges the support of the Australian Government Department of Health and Aging, and the Victorian Department of Human Services for their ongoing support and funding.

Further information on RWAV is available on the website at [www.rwav.com.au](http://www.rwav.com.au)

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