



MEDIA RELEASE

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Specialist Diabetes Services Come to Victoria's North East

A regular program of visits to Victoria's North East, by endocrinology specialist Associate Professor Richard O'Brien, means that more people with diabetes and endocrinology problems in the area have easier access to treatment.

Dr O'Brien visits Myrtleford every two months to work with local patients who require specialist treatment. Richard provides a much needed service because the nearest endocrinology service is in Melbourne, more than 280km away. Richard also takes the opportunity to provide upskilling and tutorials to the local GPs and diabetes educators in the area.

"While diabetes is well managed by rural doctors in the area, there are still some of the more difficult cases that require a specialists," Associate Professor O'Brien said.

"It is also good I think for the patients from Bright, Wangaratta and Myrtleford to be able to see someone locally, as driving long distances for people with these illnesses is a bit more difficult. I hope it has made it easier for people."

The service was being well utilised after only two visits.

His visits are possible thanks to the Australian Government funded Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP). MSOAP, which is administered in Victoria by the Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria (RWAV). This program is providing a wide range of specialist services in rural Victoria.

The aim of the program is to increase access of rural and remote communities to medical specialist services. When in Myrtleford Dr O'Brien consults at the Standish Street Surgery, but he stressed that any GP in the area is able to refer to him.

"GPs who have participated in his training have found it really valuable, his insight and expertise has helped them understand management of diabetes and other related illnesses." A spokesperson from the Standish Street Surgery said.

For Associate Professor O'Brien, it is a pleasant change from his normal round of work at Monash Medical Centre, Monash University and other practices around Melbourne.

"It's been very interesting actually," he said. "It's quite pleasant and quite clear from people I've seen that there is a demand for this sort of service. The fact that people live in the country doesn't mean they don't have these problems."

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

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