

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**01 March 2010**

### **Calling the community - have your health say**

Residents of Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook and Barham are invited to participate in a community discussion looking at solutions to their health workforce shortages.

On Wednesday March 10, from 5.30pm consultations are taking place at the Kerang Valley Resort with groups including local hospitals, medical staff and concerned community members to look at ways to bolster health services access.

Local general practitioner and regional Workforce Shortage Committee member Dr Peter Barker speaks of the event's importance.

"We encourage community members to participate in the discussions. Our towns need sustained health services and together we can better position the services available.

"Our combined effort will see a regional approach to attracting, recruiting and retaining health professionals through a number of initiatives that have worked in other regions similar to ours.

"Most importantly, we anticipate the collaboration will result in the development of a regional after hours GP service and we hope to increase the number of teaching opportunities for medical students."

Murray Plains Division of General Practice (MPDGP) chief executive officer Matt Jones explains the need for a coordinated approach.

"GPs are in short supply and in high demand throughout the State.

"We need to discuss ways to improve access to and sustain our health services for the benefit of our communities."

Return bus services will be provided at no cost from Barham and Cohuna to enable community to access this important meeting, and dinner will be provided at the event. RSVPs are essential.

To RSVP or for community members unable to attend the discussion but would like to provide some comments please contact MPDGP's workforce officer Sally May on 03 5481 1300.

Community groups participating in the discussions include Shire of Wakool, Cohuna District Hospital, Kerang & District Hospital, Barham Medical Trust, Gannawarra Shire, Barham/Koondrook Hospital, Barham & District Medical Centre, Greater Southern Area Health Service, MPDGP, Southern Mallee PCP, RWAV, Cohuna Clinic, Kerang Medical Clinic, Fitzroy Street Medical Clinic and the Anglican Church (Barham).

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For further information or comment, please contact: Samantha Marnell 0439 551 720

**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](http://www.rwav.com.au)