

MEDIA RELEASE

19 March 2010

Towns unite for better health

Koondrook, Barham, Kerang and Cohuna communities are set to benefit from an initiative supporting local medical needs and improving access to health services.

General practitioners, hospital staff, nurses, local government, regional organisations and concerned residents took part in a community consultation last week identifying positive solutions to the region's health workforce shortages.

Murray Plains Division of General Practice (MPDGP) chief executive officer Matt Jones explains the benefits.

“A united approach by these towns will enable the coordinated effort of health professionals working together and provide a model of service provision that not only sustains existing members, but also make the towns more attractive to recruit to.

“Collectively we can strengthen the region's health workforce and prevent doctors and other health professionals from burning out.”

Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) chief executive Claire Austin speaks about the collaborative advantages.

“Health professionals are in high demand and short supply so the willingness of these organisations to work cohesively will only make the towns more appealing to general practitioners and other health workers.”

Already, the united effort has resulted in agreement to properly coordinate an after hours healthcare roster for Kerang, Cohuna, Koondrook and Barham residents.

The Workforce Shortage Steering Committee is calling for membership nominations to actively involve the communities and increase the engagement of the towns, enquiries to MPDGP's Sally May on 03 5481 1300.

An overwhelming 66 attendees contributed to the discussions and a further thirty plus community members unable to attend in person submitted their comments and ideas in writing.

Media contact: RWAV media coordinator 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