

Media release – Thursday 6 November 2008

## RDASA welcomes the new country health strategy – now it's time to invest

**The Rural Doctors Association of South Australia today welcomed the release of a draft rural health plan and said now is the time for the Government to make meaningful funding commitments to rural health infrastructure and workforce.**

RDASA President Dr Steve Holmes said the draft *Strategy for Planning Country Health Services in SA* sets out broad policy commitments and priorities which provide a good basis to work from to improve health services in the State's rural communities.

"It is pleasing to see the Health Minister John Hill and the Rann Government have not only listened to but taken on board the issues country communities, health professionals and patients were calling for after it released its first health care plan back in June," Dr Holmes said.

"What we need now is for the Government to make a major funding commitment to ensure the sustainability and growth of the rural health workforce in South Australia and the sustainability of an appropriate level of services at *all* rural hospitals in the state.

"We commend the Health Care Plan Taskforce for the hard work and commitment it has made to incorporate the extensive feedback from the SA community and congratulate the Government for taking on board the sound advice it was given.

"If we want the rural health outcomes of the State's 400 000 rural Australians to improve we need the Government to now 'show us the money'.

"As the new report acknowledges, attracting and retaining a health workforce in the bush is one of the greatest challenges in sustaining health services in country areas.

"The Government must put its money where its plan is – it must resource health professionals properly, provide incentives to recruit and keep a rural health workforce, provide much needed locum support and improve IT delivery.

"If we don't properly provision a sustainable health workforce into the future the health of rural South Australians – already behind their city counterparts – will continue to suffer.

Yesterday the Federal Government announced an extra 75 training places for general practitioners. RDASA believes the SA Government must now look at what it can do to support the dwindling GP procedural population through support for training in anaesthetics, obstetrics and surgery.

RDASA welcomes the opportunity to be part of the four-week public and stakeholder consultation process and the ongoing work of the Taskforce.

---

**Available for interview: Dr Steve Holmes on 0428 421 000 or Dr Peter Rischbieth on 0408 813 143.  
RDAA media contact: Lara Cole on 0421 202 643.**

---

**Note to media:** the annual conference of the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency of South Australia and the Rural Doctors Association of South Australia will be held on Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 November 2008 at the AAMI Stadium, West Lakes, South Australia. See the full conference program at [www.ruraldoc.com.au](http://www.ruraldoc.com.au) (go to What's On and RDWA Conference).