

Rural Doctors urge State Government to increase country health services

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The Rural Doctors Association of SA (RDASA) is disappointed that not enough was done to address the serious health issues and inequalities that exist between metropolitan and rural communities in this week's South Australian Budget.

There are still significant workforce shortages across the medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health professions.

Many patients are waiting weeks and months for basic appointments, yet this Budget does not include significant workforce incentives or initiatives to attract Australian-trained graduates to rural South Australia, RDASA President Dr Graham Morris said.

"There is a dramatic increase in local medical graduates coming of university and there needs to be support both in personnel and infrastructure to train this next generation of doctors," Dr Morris said.

"There are also no improvements in support for International Medical Graduates - who are propping up our rural health system - including much needed access to Medicare and education supports for their families and themselves.

"There is no significant IT support to help bring rural hospitals into the 21st century. The tyranny of distance makes IT support more, not less important for rural health units.

"Overall the very small increase in total funding for Country Health SA, from \$622 million to \$630 million, does not allow the serious health gap between city and rural and remote patients to be narrowed and continues the disadvantages for many rural residents," Dr Morris said.

RDASA is pleased that the government has continued to support the previously announced health infrastructure upgrades to Whyalla, Berri and Ceduna. However, the only new infrastructure in the Budget is a starting amount for the GP Plus centre, for Port Pirie and a contribution to replacement of Royal Flying Doctor Service planes.

RDASA applauds the renal dialysis coordination, the replacement mobile breast screening units, Indigenous Health funding supports, the suicide prevention program and the country immediate care program

"The State Government must support the rural workforce and provide the appropriate amount of health infrastructure so desperately needed across all our country regions," Dr Morris said.

**Available for interview:
RDASA Vice President, Dr Peter Rischbieth on 0408 813 143.**