

DR. COLIN PATE

OAM. MBBS FACRRM

13/12/2011

Submission to the enquiry concerning "The factors affecting the supply of health services and medical professionals in rural areas."

My name is Dr. Colin Pate and I am a general practitioner in the rural town of Bombala in southern NSW close to the Victorian border.

I am a visiting medical officer to Bombala District Hospital and have provided this service and the general practice service for this area for just on 32 years now. I was honoured to receive an Order of Australia Medal for these services and continue to provide same.

Unfortunately over the past six years or so, I have found it extremely difficult to attract further medical help to this area. For extended periods during this time I have been the sole practitioner in an area of 3000 people, 100 kilometres away from the nearest towns containing alternative doctors. My draining patient area also extends into northern Victoria and the nearest permanent doctor/hospital in that direction is actually 200 kilometres.

I provide emergency services to this area but have found it increasingly difficult to maintain the hours due to workforce shortage (and I'm sure some degree of burnout on my behalf!).

My rural retention payment is classified as a category C (which is the equivalent of the outer regional classification I think).

I submit that it is difficult for me to understand how my situation could not possibly be described as "Remote"! This would lead to a corresponding increase in the Rural Retention Payment,, hoping to help attract another doctor. Why would a doctor come to this area to help my situation when he could qualify for the same grant in regional towns some with 15+ or so doctors who would qualify for the same but have much less onerous oncall/patient load.?

On a less personal level however, I would just like to submit this as a plea on behalf of rural doctors in similar situations as there are indeed many of them. I think whilst similar inequities exist in the system they will continue to feel alienated and unsupported and I fully endorse any action undertaking a wide review of the whole system of these grants and other incentives in encouraging rural doctors.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission.

Dr. Colin Pate