

Kyabram & District Doctors Recruitment Action Group

*C/- DG McKenzie
PO Box 408
KYABRAM 3619
11th August 2011*

*The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
CANBERRA ACT 2600*

Dear Secretary

Re: Submission to enquiry Professional Services Review

Attached are copies of a petition from concerned Kyabram and District people pertaining to the review. The citizens of our community are extremely concerned at the totally unjust treatment that the late Dr Peter Tisdall received from the bureaucracy in regard to his efforts to care for and service the huge demands placed on him by our community.

As a community we have no doubt that the treatment received by the late Dr Tisdall contributed to his early demise. The attached media reports following his death will no doubt demonstrate how revered he was in this community. There was also a huge outpouring of grief on face book following his death that attracted over 1500 messages of grief thanks and family support messages.

We look forward to a realistic approach being taken to permit doctors to service the needs of their communities in rural areas which they are very much part of.

In conclusion we bring to your attention "The Physician's Oath (Hippocratic Oath)

At the time of being admitted as a member of the medical profession:

- I solemnly pledge myself to consecrate my life to the service of humanity;
- I will give to my teachers the respect and gratitude which is their due;
- **I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity; the health of my patient will be my Number One consideration;**
- I will maintain by all the means in my power, the honour and the noble traditions of the medical profession; my colleagues will be my brothers;
- **I will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race, party politics or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient;**
- I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from the time of conception, even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity;
- I make these promises solemnly, freely and upon my honour.

If the activities of the PSR Scheme are to continue as they have in the past, then surely as a matter of urgency we must revisit this oath for amendment. Any doctor who takes this oath must serve the demands of their patients and not be hampered by bureaucratic imposed restrictions that do not look at fact.

Yours Sincerely

*Don McKenzie
On behalf of the signatories to this submission and the Kyabram and District Community*

Co-ordinators: Peter Hann ☎ 0418 575 089, Don McKenzie ☎ 0407 521 550

Town mourns doctor's death

By Michael Maskell

Tributes continue to flow for Kyabram's longest-serving doctor, Peter Tisdall, who died in his sleep Sunday morning.

The cause of his death is not yet known, but there has been an outpouring of grief from the thousands of patients of the 71-year-old who practised in Kyabram for 45 years.

One of the last of his breed, the self-confessed workaholic was known for working long hours and making calls in the middle of the night.

His friends, family and admirers said yesterday Dr Tisdall shared a bond with his patients that just isn't seen anymore.

"He was an old-time country doctor who was always there," said Dawn King of Kyabram, who credited the general practitioner with saving her daughter's life after finding a cure to her heart condition.

"Thanks to him my daughter is alive and now has three grown-up children.

"He cared for my family in serious times of illness, at all times of day or night."

As well as being a general practitioner, Dr Tisdall specialised in obstetrics and surgery.

In the first 24 years of his career in Kyabram, he delivered 1500 babies and over his career he delivered three generations. He only stopped delivering babies at the beginning of the year but was still performing surgery until his death.

He was a staunch supporter of Kyabram's hospital, and was on its board from 1979 to 1989.

At a function celebrating the hospital's 50th year at its Fen-aughy St location last year, Dr Tisdall urged the hospital's board to resist amalgamating with any other regional health organisation.

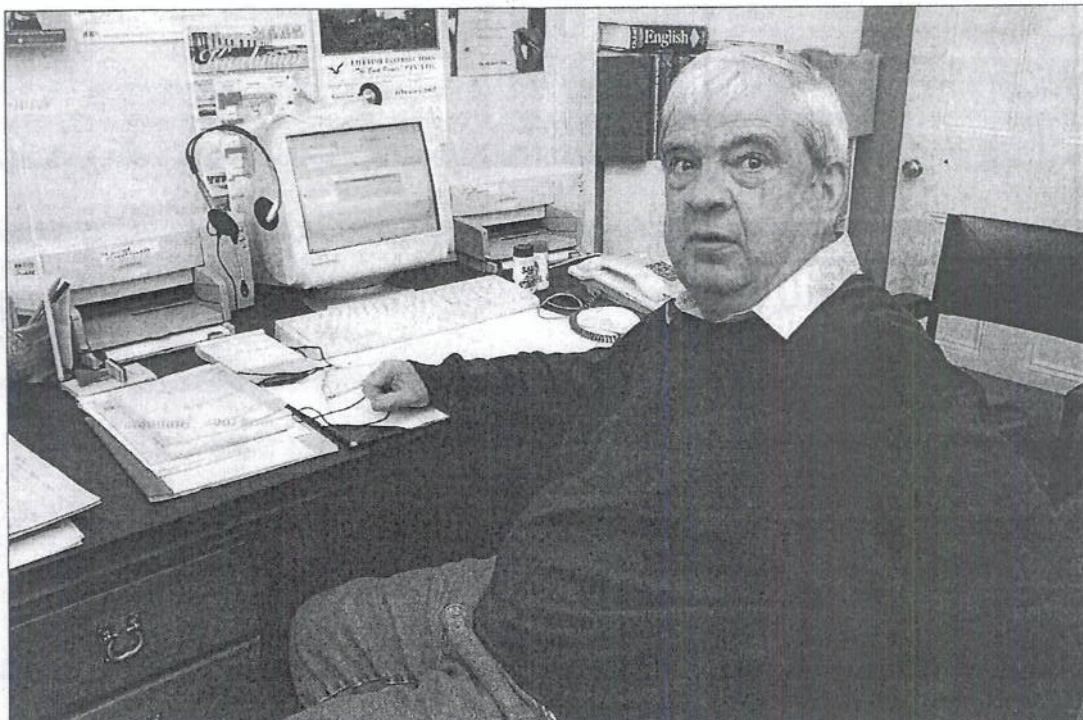
He said the assets of the hospital were its patients, doctors, nurses, committee, supporters and the community.

Dr Tisdall believed a highly specialised state-of-the-art medical unit with a high-profile medical director should be developed and would attract highly skilled doctors, nurses, trained staff and patients from around Australia.

At a recent "vision day" for the future of the hospital, he spent 30 minutes with the facilitator to ensure his continuing contribution to the direction of the hospital he loved so much.

In 1990 Dr Tisdall left medicine for a year to manage Tisdall Wines in Echuca, which he'd opened in 1979, before he came back to work at his Allan St practice in 1991.

He established the Tisdall vine-



Dr Peter Tisdall, pictured here in 2002, will be remembered for his availability and his care for his patients.

yard in 1971 and pioneered a number of commercial plantings of grape varieties in Australia, including merlot.

The winery established a national reputation during the 1980s and early 1990s on the back of producing some of the country's most awarded wine styles.

Dr Tisdall sold the winery and vineyards in 1998.

He was responsible for recruiting several general practitioners to Kyabram, including Dr Michael McQueen-Thomson who said his colleague was the kind of traditional doctor rarely seen anymore.

"He did it all; he was the classic rural all-rounder," Dr McQueen-Thomson said yesterday.

He said he believed Dr Tisdall had single-handedly kept the hospital open when the government was trying to close hospitals many years ago.

"I'm sure if it wasn't for his activity in the town the hospital probably would have been closed at that time."

He said Dr Tisdall would be remembered as the kind of doctor who had a compassion for his

loyal patients that they never forgot.

"His patients loved him and he'd do anything for them.

"He's been such a servant to the town and certainly worked very long hours and had his patients' best interest at heart.

"But certainly working the hours he did and giving everything for his patients took a toll in the end.

"He treated illness at a cost to himself.

"He was such a busy man, and it's going to be a big hole to fill; it's such a sad day for Kyabram."

Kyabram and District Health Services chief executive Neil Cowen said the hospital was inundated with calls from people wondering how they were going to cope, given Dr Tisdall had been their doctor for so long.

"It will certainly place a burden on the other doctors in town, because he'll be a very difficult person to replace," Dr Cowen said.

A date for the funeral service is yet to be set.

Right won to appeal against watchdog

Dr Peter Tisdall was one step closer to defeating the Professional Services Review following a Federal Court decision that may have set a precedent for future challenges against the Medicare watchdog.

Earlier this month, Dr Tisdall won the right to appeal against the watchdog that ruled he had engaged in "inappropriate practice" after seeing "too many" patients.

It followed a 10-year battle for the doctor after PSR investigated his practice in Kyabram.

PSR claimed on 20 days in 1996 he breached a rule that prohibits doctors from seeing more than 80 patients a day.

In the ruling, it directed Dr Tisdall to repay Medicare benefits of just more than \$140 000, be fully disqualified for one year and partially disqualified for two years.

In 2004 Dr Tisdall requested a review of the case, and the tribunal upheld the determination.

In 2005, he appealed the decision to the Federal Court and earlier this month his appeal was won, meaning Dr Tisdall's case could be heard by another PSR committee.

Throughout the battle, Dr Tisdall received strong support from the Kyabram community.

Meanwhile, Kyabram Regional Clinic is not in a position to take the expected influx of patients following Dr Tisdall's death on Sunday.

In a public notice in today's *Free Press*, the clinic said it would not have enough appointments to cope with a high influx of patients "and we will be unable to accept new patients."

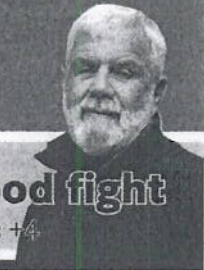
The clinic is experiencing a shortage of doctors.

Exceptional circumstances will be assessed, and the clinic is prepared to offer treatment to Dr Tisdall's patients in the aged care complexes at Kyabram and Tongala.

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Our dear doctor

The people of Kyabram left no doubt yesterday about the respect they held for Dr Peter Tisdall. Hundreds lined the main street to see the late doctor's funeral procession go by.



Horsepower: A pair of the late Dr Peter Tisdall's Clydesdales led the funeral procession through Kyabram yesterday.

Picture: Ray Sizer

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Kyabram Free Press

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 2011

\$1.20 (GST inc)

SINCE 1892



Two Clydesdale horses pulling a wagon lead the hearse carrying Dr Peter Tisdall to his final resting place as mourners line the streets.

Pictures: Ray Sizer

Regal farewell

By Zach Hope

It could have been the funeral procession of a monarch.

Dr Peter Thomas Tisdall's hearse, preceded by two Clydesdale horses pulling wagon and trailed by a police escort, slowly made its way east along Allan St, flanked on either side by hundreds of mourners.

Some of them wept openly, some hid their tears behind sunglasses. Others stood silently.

Sporadic bursts of clapping broke out as the procession passed. Other sections remained still, the clomp of the Clydesdales, the roll of the wagon and the grief from mourners the only audible sounds.

They were men, women and children of all ages and backgrounds. Many would have been delivered by the doctor, many would have been life-long patients. Most would have been treated by him at some point in their lives.

The rest simply knew, and were honouring, his importance to the town.

One woman stood watching at the entrance of a salon, her hair still soaked in shampoo. Across the road Katherine Dunkling — not one to break down — was in a



Residents line the street as the funeral procession for Dr Peter Tisdall makes its way through the town.

tearful embrace with a friend. "He'll be sorely missed," she mustered through the grief.

It was a regal procession because that's what he was to the town — a benevolent king, who, in 45 years of service, bettered the town with a concern and common touch rarely seen.

Son Matthew would say

in the eulogy: "He treated the whole of the person, not just the condition."

Shirley Kuhle, a patient of the doctor's from the beginning, lamented what was to become of the town.

"I had personal experience with both my parents. We were away and our daughters were in charge each time. He came in the

middle of the night and took care of everything and organised everything. That's a thing of the past now isn't it? An absolute thing of the past," she said.

"We used to have a business in the town and all the people that came to him shopped. And that's a lot of people because he had a lot of patients."

Tania Chiswell drove from out of town with her children to pay her respects.

"Tissys' been our family doctor ever since I came here. He delivered both my children and has done a lot for my family over the years with illnesses and things like that," she said.

The procession turned right at the police station

and made its way to the Kyabram P-12 College hall — the only indoor facility in town large enough to accommodate the many mourners.

But even that was insufficient, with people crowding the foyer and others trying to listen in from outside.

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BUSINESSES FEELING THE PINCH — page 5



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Paying tribute

From front page
The crowd heard son Matthew speak, often emotionally, of his father's colourful life; his at-times reckless nature, his at-times forgetful nature and his at-times difficult nature.

Matthew spoke of the highs and the lows, of the many good times and the many bad.

He spoke of the victories and the losses and, to the amusement of the knowing crowd, his father's illegible handwriting.

He spoke of how his father's wife Anne was the only person to truly understand him in all his complexities and eccentricities and of his overwhelming concern for his patients.

Later, as the rain clouds welled, the procession made its way to the Kyabram cemetery where the tireless doctor was finally put to rest.

Back in Allan St, his town was wondering where to turn next.



The funeral procession makes its way to Dr Peter Tisdall's final resting place.

Thousands are in limbo

Community addresses crisis

By Zach Hope

Kyabram's health care delivery is in chaos following last week's unexpected death of Dr Peter Tisdall, with thousands of his patients unable to receive care or have prescriptions renewed locally. Kyabram Regional Clinic refuses to take new patients except from Warramunda Village Aged Care Facility because it says it is already undermanned, while Kyabram and District Health Services says it only has the capacity to take urgent cases.

The situation is only getting worse with two general practitioners from the regional clinic taking annual leave from this week and not returning until later in the month.

In better news, a locum doctor has started working out of Dr Tisdall's clinic, but he can only see some patients and is only contracted to the end of next week.

Dr Tisdall's patients have been directed to other clinics outside the immediate area in places such as Echuca, Tongala and Shepparton.

Rob Danieli, a prominent member of nearly every community group in Kyabram, said the regional clinic's hard-line stance was unacceptable.

"It shows the total lack of compassion and regard to how important they are to this town," Mr Danieli said.

"The thing to note is, 'Tissy' saw a hell of a lot of patients and worked his bum off for the betterment of the community. A lot of patients of his are elderly and there are some people who don't have the finances or ability to get outside of the town."

Mr Danieli also warned of the flow-on effects associated with people leaving the town for treatment, saying local

By Neil Sanders

A meeting will be held by a special community group on Tuesday evening to discuss Kyabram's chronic doctor shortage.

The group was formed in February to address the town's already-dire healthcare situation, made even more critical with last week's unexpected death of Dr Peter Tisdall.

"This is a vital meeting for our group and our town as we need to urgently plan a process to address the

chemists and other businesses would suffer.

"The whole community has supported that clinic and this shows they don't reflect that same care that the community shows them," he said.

"Sure, there are issues with attracting doctors down to the country, but you would think in the short-term they would get off their butts and work harder. They all say they work bloody hard, but Tissy was working a lot harder than these guys."

Dr John Young of the regional clinic agreed the situation was untenable, but said it was physically impossible for his clinic to do more.

He said the town had lost three of seven doctors since June last year.

"Even when you have seven (doctors) you're busting at the seams," he said.

"We just need more doctors in town. Even one or two would be good. I don't know the answer (to attracting them). A lot of doctors want to work part-time and don't want to work clinics where

issues the town faces following the death of Dr Peter Tisdall," group member Don McKenzie said.

"We had already met with Kyabram and District Health Services, Dr Tisdall and Kyabram Regional Clinic to discuss strategies to increase the number of doctors in the area.

"We now have to crank up these efforts and get strategies and plans in place."

The group is seeking expressions of interest from doctors in Australia or over-

seas and is hoping for the support of the Victorian Government, local council and local businesses and residents.

Attention was first drawn to the intensified crisis when Kyabram Regional Clinic published a notice saying it would not accept any new patients unless under exceptional circumstances.

Dr Tisdall's patients are being directed to other clinics in the region outside of Kyabram.

you have to go on-call after hours.

"The town doesn't realise we're working our fingers to the bone."

Kyabram and District Health Services chief executive Dr Neil Cowen said the hospital was experiencing an adverse flow-on effect and was already turning some non-urgent patients of Dr Tisdall away. He expected the number to only grow.

"It's very difficult with the local practice closing their books to new patients. There's nowhere for people to go," he said.

"We have an urgent care centre which is effectively for urgent cases. If you have a sore throat that needs antibiotics, that's not urgent. But if you have (a life-threatening condition) that needs treatment you'll get it."

He said the regional clinic had assumed care of Dr Tisdall's hospital in-patients from the day of his death on Sunday last week.

The cause of Dr Tisdall's death is still unknown.



Rob Danieli is disappointed.

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to a tireless worker



The procession makes its way through Kyabram for Dr Peter Tisdall's funeral on Monday.

Doctor meant the world

By Zach Hope

The DePasquale family say they would have been fewer in number without Dr Peter Tisdall.

The late doctor, farewelled by Kyabram on Monday, quite possibly saved the lives of Mary and her fifth child Ross when she haemorrhaged following a Caesarean section.

He was able to stabilise both patients and have them taken to Melbourne for specialist care where they made full recoveries.

On another occasion, Mary's husband Antonio suffered a heart attack late at night and was saved by a sick Dr Tisdall who rushed to the hospital despite his own ailments to attend him.

Antonio was stabilised, was sent to Melbourne and is still alive today.

On yet another occasion, Antonio and Mary's granddaughter Laura stopped breath-



Carmel Basile, Mary DePasquale and Maria Papalia.

ing when she was just six weeks old only to be revived by Dr Tisdall and nurses.

They are just some of the stories offered by the DePasquales from their 42-year relationship with Dr Tisdall. He also delivered four out of Mary and Antonio's five children and attended every one of those children's weddings.

To them, he was

more than a doctor.

"There are no words really. What can I say, he meant the world," Mary said, choking back tears.

"He was too much of a good doctor, too kind-hearted.

"My words are lost.

"He was a friend, he was a lifeline and he went out of his way to help.

"I suffer from migraines and he

never knocked me back or gave me a time limit. His door was always open — night or day. He was a legend."

Dr Tisdall's death has left a gaping hole in the town's healthcare landscape.

Kyabram Regional Clinic does not have the resources to take on all of Dr Tisdall's many patients and District

Health Services can only see urgent cases.

Mary and the family said the remaining doctors in town were all excellent, but they worried what would become of Kyabram and surrounds now Dr Tisdall was gone.

"The town needs some direction. His patients need some direction. Whether that comes from the hospital or council, there needs to be some planning," Mary's daughter Carmel Basile said.

"They knew some day this was going to happen, whether it was Dr Tisdall or someone else. How is the town going to deal with this?"

Another of Mary's daughters, Maria, added: "With our family, and I know it was the same with other families, he was always there in the middle of the night if you needed him. And you hear it up and down the street: 'Where are we going to go?' People are hoping they don't

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In brief

Burglaries

Kyabram police are investigating a burglary at a Crichton Rd property overnight on July 1.

Acting Senior Sergeant Troy Hargadon said offenders forced their way into the premises and police were not sure if anything was stolen.

"Our investigations are continuing," he said.

Police are investigating a burglary at a Lilford Crt business premises the same night.

Act Sen Sgt Hargadon said power tools worth more than \$5000 were taken after thieves forced their way into the premises.

Anyone with information on the two burglaries is asked to phone Kyabram police on 5853 1777.

Field day

A composting field day at Pyramid Hill next Wednesday, July 13 will show farmers how to turn flood-damaged hay

into compost.

Many farmers in the region have been left with mountains of unusable hay because of floods during summer, but machinery is now available to turn it into a valuable commodity.

The field day will include:

■ A demonstration of how to build a compost pile using spoiled hay and dairy effluent;

■ Machinery demonstrations for large-scale compost making;

■ Discussions of Environmental Protection Authority and dairy hygiene requirements; and

■ A discussion on the making and use of compost with Department of Primary Industries compost expert Kevin Wilkinson and healthy soils specialist Declan McDonald.

The day begins 11 am at Daniel O'Toole's dairy at 502 O'Toole's Rd, Pyramid Hill.

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