

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

Dear Secretary

Inquiry into the factors affecting the supply of health services and medical professionals in rural areas.

As the General Manager of a remote council, Balranald Shire, I feel I have an insight to offer. This Shire has had the fortune to have secured the services of a foreign trained doctor and he has been with us for about 8 years.

Council has provided a modern brick home at no rental.

There are subsidies paid to encourage the doctor to provide certain services to the elderly which have no effect, Council has ended up paying a "fee" to get the doctor to visit the aged care facility and provide ongoing care. This area needs review.

This town also has two other doctors one of whom is a OTD who has not been able to get through the english requirements and another who gave up medicine because professional support was not provided when a crisis occurred.

It seems in this instance the system is the problem not a shortage of doctors.

ASGC-RA is not working to deliver incentives where they are most needed. The scheme needs to be more generous as doctors get further from centres with:

- 1. Other doctors to network with*
- 2. Other doctors to share on-call work load*
- 3. Professional training facilities*
- 4. Regular passenger aircraft services*

I have had person experience with major surgery in Melbourne and Sydney in the past 2 years and would comment that the relationship between rural GP's and city specialists appears quite good.

Getting sufficient nursing staff appears to be problematic in our area. The marketing of community life may be one way around this. We have hosted many medical students in the 7 years I have been in Balranald and most have enjoyed the experience. Those who come from a rural background are more likely to take up a rural practice.

I have a friend who is a doctor and her son trained as a doctor in Townsville under the remote entry scheme. He will go on to practice in a rural area. This scheme works and bears further investigation to validate such anecdotal evidence.

*Chris Littlemore
General Manager
Balranald Shire Council*

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