

Submission to Senate Committee:

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

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I assisted the Rural Doctors Association Rural Specialists Group in 2008 prepare a position paper on the above topic and am writing to endorse its content.

One concern I have relates to the delay in application of the rural distribution formula (RDF) in NSW for determination of the level of financial support of State Government Public Hospitals by the State Government. I understand that Lismore Base Hospital has not received its calculated allocation for many many years. Medical Administrators are forced to reduce services when they do not receive money for their budgets. The cumulative effect of under funding year after year puts an intolerable strain on the health system in areas where the population is growing rapidly.

I personally experienced a reduction in the number of public operating sessions I was allocated at Casino Hospital, west of Lismore and also a reduction in the number of operations I was able to schedule on an operating list due, I believe, to budgetary constraints. When I first came to Lismore from Sydney I used to operate at Casino Hospital on Mondays – fortnightly (typically 0800hrs to 1500hrs). If an operating list at Casino fell on a public holiday Monday I used to be allowed to reschedule the list onto another Monday. In time the frequency of lists was reduced to 3 every 2 months from 4 and the ability to swap Mondays away from public holidays was withdrawn. Then I was asked to limit the number of patients on a list to 10 instead of 12.

I eventually chose not to renew my public hospital contract several years ago.

Again, many factors of importance to this commission are addressed in the RDA Rural Specialists' Group Position Paper, edited by John Graham (vascular surgeon, Lismore).

Thank you

Lachlan LIPSETT