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Langton Medical Centre
37 Langhorne Street
Dandenong 3175
11 March 2011

Committee Chair Mr. Steve Georganas MP
The House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing

I have been a general practitioner in Dandenong since 1973.
When I joined Langton Medical Centre I was the 8th full time general practitioner in the practice.
There were another three large group practices in central Dandenong with a total of 32 full time GP's, as well as several solo practitioners.
About 30% of these GP's were OTD's, mostly from the British Isles.
Langton Medical Centre is now the only surviving group family practice.

The general shortage of doctors is well known.

In the past general practice used sessional doctors, which included female doctors and hospital doctors working for clinical experience. These doctors no longer can access provider numbers. Provider numbers are limited to those with FRACGP or equivalent qualification and are controlled by the Department.

Whilst there may be a perception that Dandenong is too far from the CBD, the real problem is there are NO GP's. Certainly low socio economic problems make it a less attractive location than more affluent parts of the metropolis.
There are high incidences of chronic diseases including diabetes, mental illnesses, obesity, cancer and cardiovascular illnesses.
It would be useful to have doctors from other cultural and linguistic groups.
Dandenong is one of the most multicultural centres in the world with over 100 different cultural groups, including many refugees and of course this raises extra issues in patient care.

There are also many aged care facilities and nursing homes in our area having difficulty in obtaining adequate general practice support and cover.

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Out-of-hours access to GP's is another problem, but while this is important, our problem is maintaining an adequate level of in-hours care. The financial burden involved in the running costs of an out-of-hours clinic makes it extremely difficult quite apart from the workforce problems.

We have been searching for new GP's to join us for years without success. We recognize the urgent need to mentor junior colleagues and pass on experience and expertise gained over decades of practice, and to continue the care of our 14,800 patients.

We have advertised in Seek.com, Careerone, the New Zealand medical Association journal, and the Australian Government website – Job Search, and the Dandenong Casey Division of General Practice.

Unfortunately most of our doctors are nearing the end of their careers. One has just retired due to ill health and another is retiring at the end of the financial year. Unless we are successful in recruiting new doctors to our practice in the very near future, it is inevitable the practice will have to close the doors after 55 years of care for this community.

Dr John Meaney
Senior Partner.