

My name is Dr Virginia Wrice

I have been a medical practitioner in Gundagai, NSW and Visiting Medical Officer at Gundagai District Hospital for 29 years where my husband, also a doctor, and I provide 24 hours a day, seven days a week cover. Gundagai is on the Hume Highway about 4 hours drive from Sydney. Our closest regional centre is Wagga Wagga 85 kilometres away.

We have almost 3,000 whole patient equivalents and we provide accident and emergency, inpatient and outpatient care at the hospital to the local community and a large number of visitors and travellers.

Gundagai is classified as an RA 2 town, the same as a raft of much larger towns and coastal centres.

The incentives provided to small country practices such as Gundagai are now the same as in larger centres such as Wagga Wagga, Coffs Harbour and Hobart. Because of this, the ASGC-RA classification is severely limiting any competitive advantage we may have had previously in attracting GP registrars and other suitably qualified doctors to our practice. Indeed a registrar assigned to our practice for the last six months pulled out at the last minute leaving a gap in our workforce. As a result I had to spend many tens of thousands of dollars on a number of different locums because of the need to continue to provide an ongoing medical service to the people of Gundagai and its visitors.

The country region of the Coast City Country Training Provider tells us that there will be no Australian trained doctors in the country area next year; that is only doctors forced to come to the country under the moratorium arrangements will apply and it is our experience that the vast majority of these have no intention of remaining in rural areas and naturally migrate to larger population centres and capital cities.

The ASGC-RA classification is inappropriate and detrimental to the ability of small country towns such as Gundagai to attract and retain suitably qualified medical practitioners.

Dr Virginia Wrice

16th December, 2011