

21 December 2011



MAYOR'S OFFICE

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

Dear Sir / Madam

INQUIRY INTO FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUPPLY OF HEALTH SERVICES AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN RURAL AREAS

I refer to the current Senate Inquiry being conducted on the abovementioned matters and now wish to make the following submission for Dubbo City Council.

The factors affecting the attraction and retention of medical staff in Dubbo include:-

- The lack of quality medical facilities. The current Dubbo Base Hospital is sub-standard and in desperate need of renewal. Working in sub-standard facilities and with outdated medical equipment is certainly a deterrent to medical staff thinking of relocating to Dubbo. Medical staff would want to use their skills on the latest and most technologically advanced medical equipment and to keep their skills current by working with such equipment on a regular basis in work situations.
- There exists the potential for medical staff to become the only specialist in their field in Dubbo and therefore become over-worked. This has previously happened with anaesthetists. Some anaesthetists resigned or moved from Dubbo leaving only 2 anaesthetists to cope with a full workload of operations in a busy regional hospital. This affected their morale, health, family lives and plans for annual and recreational leave. These staff become torn between leaving Dubbo for a better working situation and not wanting to leave the community without essential services. This similarly would apply to general practitioners in smaller practices where staff could be on regular 24-hour call due to the lack of back-up staff.
- Becoming the only or one of only a few doctors creates a lack of colleague and peer support and contact. This can be difficult for younger medical practitioners.
- Access to further training and conferences / conventions / workshops / lectures services and facilities in rural and regional centres is more difficult due to transport issues. This creates a greater cost and more time involved in travelling.



- Media reports of the social profile of some communities relating to areas such as crime do not assist in trying to attract medical professionals.
- The quality and quantity of facilities and services in rural and regional centres deters professional people. Such services and facilities include entertainment, sport, recreational and cultural activities, schooling and tertiary education, child care and quality housing stock. These may not be to the standard in larger metropolitan areas
- Opportunities for other family members to work in the region may be limited or even non-existent particularly if the partner of the medical professional is a professional person in a specialised field as well.

I thank you for the opportunity to make comment in respect of this important issue.

Yours faithfully

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of the City of Dubbo