



THE COUNTRY MAYORS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC

"What we want is nothing more than equity"

COMMUNIQUÉ

Country Mayors Association of NSW – September Rural Health Forum

Country Mayors Association of NSW held our second Rural and Regional health forum on 14-15 September. Our hosts were Wagga Wagga City Council and the Murrumbidgee Local Health District, and more than 70 CMA members representing 34 Regional Councils from across the state were in attendance across the two days.

Members were treated to a Mayoral reception after a guided bus tour of the special activation precinct on Thursday afternoon. On Friday morning, members gathered at the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital health hub lecture rooms to hear from professional leaders in their field of medical expertise. These included presentations from:

Dr Joe McGirr, Member for Wagga Wagga, Chair Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health

Advocacy of CMA has been absolutely critical to improved remote, rural and regional health services in the last few years.

Dr Joe McGirr spoke about the Murrumbidgee Health & Knowledge Precinct and its beginnings in the realisation that what was needed was a regional precinct that included research. The advantages of creating a precinct include: genuine partnerships; better use of physical assets; and an ability to include educational elements.

Dr McGirr talked about the role of Wagga Wagga City Council in the precinct, the governance structure of the precinct, and its current priorities.

Professor Ruth Stewart: "Attracting and connecting with a generalist workforce"

Professor Ruth Stewart outlined her role as National Rural Health Commissioner, and talked about the pathway of rural and remote communities in health.

Among the challenges is attracting, retaining and supporting rural doctors, and Professor Stewart discussed the National Rural Generalist Pathway and its goals, including formal recognition of rural generalism, streamlining training, increasing training and job opportunities, and retaining rural generalists in rural and remote communities.

Mr Richard Colbran PhD, Chief Executive, Rural Doctors Network

The Rural Doctors Network (RDN) turns 35 this year and Mr Colbran talked about the network's shared goal with the CMA - "wanting nothing more than equity".

Mr Colbran talked about the RDN's podcasts, including the most recent one with CMA Chair Jamie Chaffey. Dr Colbran and Mayor Chaffey signed a Memorandum of Understanding, and the Executive of CMA gathered for a photo to celebrate the occasion.

Dr Michael Holland, NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Health

Dr Michael Holland stated there could be no health service without health workers.

He told the forum about recent government measures to increase the numbers of and funding for midwives and nurses. He said the NSW Government was working closely with the Commonwealth, RDA and RDN to increase the number of rural generalist positions.

Ms Jill Ludford, Acting Deputy Secretary, NSW Regional Health Division: "Strengthening engagement with communities"

Ms Ludford is also the CEO of the Murrumbidgee Health District, where there is a way forward, including an end-to-end training school.

Ms Ludford stated her commitment as CEO to the best health care for communities, and talked about the importance of vision and planning, as keeping communities informed. The Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022-2032, Priority 4 is to keep communities informed, build engagement, and seek feedback.

She noted there would be a review of how health districts have implemented the guiding principles by regional LHDs.

Mr Jeremy Mitchell, Director Engagement, Rural Doctors Network

Mr Mitchell talked about the complexity of the health system, and RDN's role in helping local governments to understand how it works and their part in it. He said RDN's Health Access Impact Platform concentrates on local service viability, workforce pool, and workforce capability.

Mr Mitchell said the signing of an MOU with CMA was the second MOU had signed in a month – both of them with local government, emphasising the importance of working together.

Professor Len Bruce, Executive Director of Medical Services, Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Professor Len Bruce outlined the concept behind the Murrumbidgee Local Health District - in rural, by rural for rural. He talked about the district's training pathway, employment model, and the workforce solution of embedding trainees in the community.

Mr Michael McCormack MP, Member for Riverina

Mr McCormack talked to attendees about the difference in rural doctoring and the importance of the Rural Medical School Network.

He noted rural health needed greater attention.

Ms Christine Stephens, District Director Nursing and Midwifery, Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Ms Stephens spoke about the attraction and retention of a workforce and a number of programs that were in place, including the MLHD GradStart Program and Support, and the Rural Nurse Practitioner-Rural Generalist TNP.

Ms Tanya Thompson MP, Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Health

Ms Thompson acknowledged the health system in the Myall Lakes was experiencing problems, and she was keen to represent her electorate on this matter.

She spoke about ensuring the NSW Government implemented all recommendations of the Upper House inquiry into rural, regional, and remote health, and talked about the importance of tele/virtual health when required.

As a Member of the Select Committee, Ms Thompson said we would continue to work for communities and have real conversations with them.

Mr Brendan Cutmore, Director Information and Performance Support, NSW Regional Health Division

Ms Michelle Maxwell, Director, Strategy, Governance and Delivery, NSW Regional Health Division

Ms Maxwell acknowledged the NSW Regional Health Division's vision - the Regional Health Division Plan. The 2023 priorities include: the 2022-32 Strategic Plan; the Rural Health Inquiry Response; and Building Community Engagement.

Speakers noted the status of 68 of the actions of the Upper House inquiry with: 15 completed and validated with evidence; 42 in progress, on track and validated with evidence; 7 may have challenges and or limited evidence; 4 no or limited progress.

Mr Cutmore and Ms Maxwell talked about key achievements and themes.

Dr Matthew Thompson, Staff Specialist Geriatrician, Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Ms Rosemary Garthwaite, District Manager for Aged Care, Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Dr Thompson and Ms Garthwaite spoke about the benefits of becoming an age-friendly health service in an ageing population.

Cr Jamie Chaffey – Chairman



Dr Joe McGirr, member for Wagga Wagga, Dr Michael Holland MP Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Ms Tanya Thompson MP Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Health, CMA Chairman Cr Jamie Chaffey Mayor Gunnedah Shire Council, CMA Deputy Chairman Cr Rick Firman Mayor Temora Shire Council



Professor Ruth Stewart National Rural Health Commissioner, Australian department of Health



Ms Jill Ludford, Acting Deputy Secretary, NSW regional Health Division of NSW Health



The Hon Michael McCormack MP, Federal Member for Riverina, Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific



Signing Ceremony of MoU between CMA & RDN

CMA Deputy Chairman Mayor Temora Shire Council, Mr Jeremy Mitchell , Director Rural Doctors Network, Immediate Past Chairman Ken Keith Mayor Parkes Shire Council, CMA executive Russell Webb Mayor of Tamworth Regional Council, Ms Kathy Hetherington Service Delivery Operations Manager at Rural Doctors network, CMA executive Craig Davies Mayor Narromine Shire Council, CMA executive John Medcalf Mayor Lachlan Shire Council, CMA Chairman Jamie Chaffey Mayor Gunnedah Shire Council and Mr Richard Colbran PhD, Chief Executive of Rural Doctors Network



Members of CMA gathered at the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital – Health Hub, lecture hall to participate in the Rural and Regional Health Forum, image shows Mayor Chris Homer of Shellharbour Shire Council and Mayor Brian Monaghan of Bland Shire active during Q&A time at the forum.

For further information, contact Cr Jamie Chaffey on 0467 402 412