



Country Mayors Association of NEW SOUTH WALES

Chairperson: Cr Ken Keith OAM
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MINUTES

RURAL HEALTH FORUM

FRIDAY, 26 MAY 2022 AUDITORIUM, CLUB YORK, SYDNEY

The meeting opened at 1.06 p.m.

1. ATTENDANCE:

Armidale Regional Council, Mayor, Cr Sam Coupland, Mayor
Armidale Regional Council, Mr James Roncon, General Manager
Bathurst Regional Council, Cr Robert Taylor, Mayor
Bathurst Regional Council, Mr David Sherley, General Manager
Bega Valley Shire Council, Cr Russell Fitzpatrick, Mayor
Bega Valley Shire Council, Mr Anthony McMahon, Acting CEO
Berrigan Shire Council, Cr Matthew Hannan, Mayor
Bland Shire Council, Mr Ray Smith, General Manager
Cabonne Shire Council, Cr Kevin Beatty, Mayor
Cabonne Shire Council, Mr Brad Burns, General Manager
Coolamon Shire Council, Cr David McCann, Mayor
Coolamon Shire Council, Mr Tony Donoghue, General Manager
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Cr Charlie Sheahan, Mayor
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Mr Glen McAtear, Acting Deputy General Manager
Cowra Shire Council, Cr Bill West, Mayor
Cowra Shire Council, Cr Ruth Fagan
Cowra Shire Council, Mr Paul Devery, General Manager
Edward River Council, Cr Peta Betts, Mayor
Edward River Council, Mr Phil Stone, General Manager
Federation Council, Cr Patrick Bourke, Mayor
Forbes Shire Council, Cr Phyllis Miller, Mayor
Forbes Shire Council, Mr Steve Loane, General Manager
Goulburn Mulwaree Council, Cr Bob Peter Walker, Mayor
Goulburn Mulwaree Council, Mr Matt O'Rourke, Acting General Manager
Griffith City Council, Cr John Doug Curran, Mayor
Gunnedah Shire Council, Cr Jamie Chaffey, Mayor
Gunnedah Shire Council, Mr Eric Growth, General Manager
Gwydir Shire Council, Cr John Coulton, Mayor
Gwydir Shire Council, Mr Max Eastcott, General Manager

Gwydir Shire Council, Cr Catherine Egan, Deputy Mayor
Gwydir Shire Council, Cr Tiffany Galvin
Gwydir Shire Council, Mrs Leeah Daley
Gwydir Shire Council, Mrs Carmen Southwell
Hay Shire Council, Cr Carol Oataway, Mayor
Hay Shire Council, Mr David Webb, General Manager
Inverell Shire Council, Cr Paul Harmon, Mayor
Kempsey Shire Council, Cr Leo Hauville, Mayor
Kempsey Shire Council, Mr Craig Milburn, General Manager
Kiama Municipal Council, Cr Neil Reilly, Mayor
Leeton Shire Council, Cr Tony Reneker, Mayor
Leeton Shire Council, Ms Jackie Kruger, General Manager
Liverpool Plains Shire Council, Cr Doug Hawkins, Mayor
Liverpool Plains Shire Council, Ms Joanna Sangster, General Manager
Mid Western/Mudgee Regional Council, Mr Brad Cam, General Manager
Moree Plains Shire Council, Mr Nick Tobin, Acting General Manager
Narrandera Shire Council, Cr Neville Kschenka, Mayor
Narrandera Shire Council, Mr George Cowan, General Manager
Oberon Council, Cr Mark Kellam, Mayor
Oberon Council, Mr Gary Wallace, General Manager
Orange City Council, Cr Jason Hamling, Mayor
Orange City Council, Mr Dave Wadell, General Manager
Parkes Shire Council, Cr Ken Keith, Mayor
Tamworth Regional Council, Cr Judy Coates
Temora Shire Council, Mr Gary Lavelle, General Manager
Tenterfield Shire Council, Cr Bronwyn Petrie, Mayor
Upper Lachlan Shire Council, Cr Pam Kensit, Mayor
Uralla Shire Council, Cr Bob Crouch, Deputy Mayor
Uralla Shire Council, Ms Kate Jessop, General Manager
Warren Shire Council, Mr Gary Woodman, General Manager
Warrumbungle Shire Council, Cr Ambrose Doolan, Mayor
LGNSW, Mr Scott Phillips, CEO
ALGA, Cr Linda Scott, President

APOLOGIES:

As submitted

To consider the recommendations of the Legislative Council report into “Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales”

Welcome and Introduction of Proceedings, Cr Ken Keith OAM, Chairman, Country Mayors Association of NSW

The Chairman welcomed members of CMA which advocates, for health services in rural NSW. It was Country Mayors that lobbied the State Government to establish a Ministry of Regional Health. The purpose of the forum is to guide a discussion and solutions for rural health in NSW. We need to get both Commonwealth and State Governments to pursue a new policy direction.

Cr Jamie Chaffey, Deputy Chairman, Country Mayors Association of NSW, Rural Health a Local Government Perspective

The Country Mayors Association is demanding change and acknowledges the Inquiry and all those that participated in it. Politics has to be removed from the equation. There should be no divide between metropolitan and rural NSW. The Ministry of Regional Health has been established because of Country Mayors. The Inquiry is the first to identify the shortcomings of rural health in NSW. There is an election due in NSW in the next 10 months and swift action is required. There were 720 submissions to the Inquiry which identified poorer health outcomes in rural NSW compared to metropolitan areas. There are significant poorer outcomes and poorer substandard and levels of care. It is a complicated issue but action will save lives. Country Mayors calls on the implementation of all recommendations. Cr Chaffey outlined the issues affecting the Gunnedah community.

The Hon Bronnie Taylor MLC, Minister for women, Minister for Regional Health, Minister for Mental Health

The Minister is a registered nurse who practiced in rural NSW. The Minister thanked those that had the courage to come forward. 95% of patients admitted to rural hospitals had a good experience. That is not to say there aren't problems. We need to concentrate on those concerns. The best outcomes for mental health is to keep the patients in their communities. We haven't included Local Government in our conversations. Aged care support is a commitment of the new Federal Government. Driving hundreds of kilometers to see their loved ones is unacceptable. The State Government has established a Division of Regional Health and a Coordinator. There will be designated staff to consider problems as they arise. In respect of Telehealth and visual care the Minister does not believe virtual care should replace face to face consultation. There are benefits of Telehealth such as of lesser driving to appointments. The Government will not impose models of care that the communities do not want. Different levels of salaries to staff doing the same job causes discontent. 5,000 nurses per year are coming through the system. The doctors issue is a big issue. We are losing a lot of doctors as they are not supported as much as they should. A new medical school has been established at CSU. The Government has to address the recommendations of the Inquiry and the Government will respond before the six months timeline. We face enormous challenges and we will not walk away from them

Mr Ryan Park MP, Shadow Minister for Health and Mental Health

The Shadow Minister plans to approach the new National Cabinet with the outcomes of the Inquiry. He became Shadow minister for Health 3 years ago and after meeting practitioners from Far Western NSW he has tried to initiate change. The Inquiry had 720 submissions had 22 findings and 44 recommendations. There are a lot of good things that have happened but the Government needs to acknowledge a lot more needs to be done. The recommendations have not missed the mark and having a Minister for Regional Health is a good thing. There has not been a focus in the past at a bureaucratic level. We have agreed to implement the recommendations and there needs to be a report to each session of parliament on the implementation of the recommendations. Some people who made submissions took a risk to come forward. There needs to be more State responsibility for rural health and there needs to be regular input from the National Council. NSW needs to get better as there is a bureaucratic culture of secrecy. Boards are distant from their communities. There needs to be an opportunity for health workers to come forward with their concerns.

Mr Richard Colbran, Chief Executive Officer, Rural Doctors Network NSW

The Network was established in 1988 and accesses communities, workforce organisations and the sector. Focuses and challenges are access service models, chronic disease

prevention, available hospitals preservations, workforce retention, recruitment, future workforce pathways and immersion, regions of choice campaigns, practice and NGO viability, remuneration advocacy, education, and engagement in workforce planning. What's working is well planned and tracked long term localized health models, workforce acknowledgement, rural health advocacy, practice and service system standards, future workforce programs, coordination of natural disaster responses and multi agency recruitment. What we can do together is joint rural health advocacy, LGA or town based health system and workforce plans, rural workforce campaigns, immersion programs and recruitment

Adjunct Professor, Ruth Stewart, National Rural Health Commissioner for Australia

Ruth Stewart has spent 30 years as a rural GP. At the time of the Medicare freeze GP's were the predominant provider for primary health care but now it is specialist providers. Rural communities need rural generalists. There are far fewer doctors per head of population in remote and rural communities. GP's in these communities are not doing General Practice work. Patient experience is that there are improved numbers in specialists but declining numbers in GP's. The economic drivers of medical care are financial incentives, Medicare indexation freeze, and ineffective retention grants. To rural proof the workforce metropolitan students with metropolitan internship only 12% become rural doctors. Non metro students with non metropolitan internship significant numbers stay in a non metropolitan practice.

Where to from here for Regional and Rural Health – Suggestions for positive change

Issues that need to be considered by Country Mayors are

- (1) Local Health Districts need to introduce measures to hold on to internees
- (2) Develop a system to get overseas doctors into are communities (Leeton)
- (3) Support UNE, CSU, and SCU to establish new medical schools (Uralla)
- (4) Investigate administration and boundaries of Health Districts (Tenterfield)
- (5) Have Primary Care nurses connected to hospitals (Tamworth)
- (6) Indigenous Training of indigenous people for their communities (Parkes)
- (7) Advocacy approach and strategy to be developed by Country Mayors (Richard Colbran)
- (8) Ensure the State Government reports on the progress of the Inquiry (Richard Colbran)
- (9) The Commonwealth Government to explain what they are doing in respect of the Inquiry (Richard Colbran)
- (10) Thank those that have worked hard under a difficult situation (Richard Colbran)
- (11) Councils build health plans (Richard Colbran)
- (12) The issue is workforce. Where is the workforce and where do you get it (Richard Colbran)
- (13) Travel allowances to be simplified (Richard Colbran)
- (14) Need bipartisan support of the 44 recommendations and continuation of Minister for Regional Health
- (15) Reestablish Hospital Boards (Hay)

There being no further business the Forum closed at 5.17pm.

Cr Ken Keith OAM
Chairman Country Mayor's Association of NSW