



RURAL DOCTORS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND

*'Supporting Rural Doctors and Rural Communities'*

## MEDIA RELEASE

### ***Doubled Graduate Numbers Good News For Country Qld***

President of the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland, Dr Sheilagh Cronin, today welcomed news that 550 doctors would graduate from Queensland's four medical schools this year.

**"Until 5 years ago, it was only half this number," Dr Cronin said. "All Australians had been let down by past planning bumbles but at last, there's a bright light at the end of the tunnel as long as middle-managers don't waste *this* opportunity with cost-cutting measures."**

The outlook for rural Queenslanders in the next 2-3 years was especially good, Dr Cronin said. "Queensland leads the rest of the nation with it's Rural Generalist training program," she explained.

"The Office of Rural Health revealed in Longreach last week that there are already *more than 110 doctors training in advanced rural skills* that country communities need. Those doctors are starting to come online in the next year or two and our established members expect them to hit the ground running: in maternity, anaesthetics and surgery. In turn, these doctors will be training the new graduates."

**However, RDAQ warns Queensland Health that well-trained rural generalist doctors and the next generation of graduates would 'slip through the net' if there were not enough opportunities and facilities to use their skills.**

"We're concerned for patients in communities where hospitals may be rebuilt or renovated without procedural facilities," Dr Cronin said. "For example, in Winton, we're worried that there will be no new facilities for emergency surgery. If a woman presents in obstructed labour, the flying O&G team can come but they would have nowhere to do an emergency

caesarean. Decisions like that (to remove the operating room) place small numbers of patients at great risk.”

“We’re also concerned that in places where facilities are good, and demand is sufficient, that there should be jobs available for these doctors to consolidate their skills. We have already heard that doctors with obstetric skills can’t find jobs where they can deliver babies, even though communities all over the State are crying out for birthing units to be re-opened.”

**“The days of maternity closures and country patients facing increased travel burdens may be just about over, but Queensland Health must make the most of the opportunities on offer right now!”**

**For comment or further information contact:**

Dr Sheilagh Cronin (RDAQ President)      0428 789 604  
Dr Michael Rice      0428 154 912

GPO Box 2523, BRISBANE QLD 4001  
Ph: 3221 4444; Fax: 3221 3748  
Email: [rdaq@rdaq.com.au](mailto:rdaq@rdaq.com.au) Website: [www.rdaq.com.au](http://www.rdaq.com.au)