



RURAL DOCTORS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND

*'Supporting Rural Doctors and Rural Communities'*

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **“Renew, don’t remove” - country docs warning on procedural facilities**

President of The Rural Doctors Association of Queensland, Dr Sheilagh Cronin, today called on Queensland Health to include procedural facilities when rural hospitals are upgraded or rebuilt.

“Our members are concerned that poor planning now will leave rural hospitals without vital equipment and infrastructure in future,” she said.

Dr Cronin explained that well-equipped procedural rooms which allow doctors to deliver a general anaesthetic and perform procedures provided safe, sustainable and effective delivery of health services to rural and remote Queenslanders. They also contributed to the overall efficiency of the State-wide system by freeing-up busy city emergency departments.

**“RDAQ supports refurbishment and renewal of rural hospitals”, she said. “However, it appears that facilities such as procedural rooms may be stripped from some communities. This will discourage doctors and compromise care in affected areas.”**

“Country patients deserve access to certain procedures locally,” Dr Cronin said. “These facilities can be used for some non-urgent cases that would otherwise have to travel, and they also support emergencies that all country doctors are trained for.”

“Queensland is so large and so decentralised that no matter how many aircraft you’ve got, it still takes many hours for critical patients to be transferred,” she said. “Country hospitals need to cope in the meantime or patients will suffer in the short and long term.”

**“Even in south-east Queensland, outlying hospitals report that it routinely takes an hour and a half for a helicopter to arrive in an emergency. While limited ambulance equipment might be all you can deliver to a back paddock or a roadside, if the patient is in a hospital with doctors and nurses then more sophisticated facilities are expected.”**

“Queensland leads the nation in training Rural Generalist doctors specifically to work in country areas. This is a great plan, but it will fail if they have to work in major centres to use their skills”.

Dr Cronin said equitable health access for country Queenslanders was about priorities, not resources. “Health Ministers and senior bureaucrats say that there’s enough money in the system, thanks to the \$10 billion Action Plan that was preserved in this year’s State budget.”

**“We just have to make sure it’s spent to benefit all Queenslanders, not just city-dwellers.”**

“Don’t miss the bigger picture”, Dr Cronin warns. “Our rural and regional areas are paying for that Health Action Plan. It is already difficult to attract workers and their families to these areas, and they simply will not go if health care is not available”.

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