

Saturday 15 October 2022

## Rural doctor recognised for “enormous service” to SA community over 30 years

A Rural Generalist doctor who has served the small community of Cummins, on South Australia’s Eyre Peninsula, for over 30 years has received the ACRRM-RDAA Peter Graham ‘Cohuna’ Award for 2022.

**Dr Gerard Quigley** was presented with the award at the Rural Medicine Australia (RMA22) conference dinner in Canberra on Friday night.

Presented annually by the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) and Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), the Award recognises rural doctors who provide outstanding advocacy and medical service to their community.

It has been awarded since 2008 in memory of the late Dr Peter Graham, who served the Cohuna community in rural Victoria for 48 years.

**ACRRM immediate past President, Dr Sarah Chalmers, said:**

“Gerard is highly deserving of this prestigious Award, given the enormous dedication and commitment he has shown in caring for the people of Cummins and surrounding towns for more than three decades.

“During that time, he has provided comprehensive general practice care at his Lower Eyre Family Practice, emergency and inpatient care at Cummins and District Memorial Hospital, and ongoing care of the local aged care residents.

“He has worked hard to ensure that the hospital can continue to provide 24 hour emergency care, including general medicine, day surgery, outpatients and palliative care. As such, he is regularly on-call to attend the hospital, both during the day and overnight.

“Gerard also provides anaesthetic services at the hospital, and for many years provided 24/7 on-call obstetric services until the hospital’s maternity unit was closed some years ago.

“While Gerard has worked mainly as a solo doctor during his time in Cummins, he has been a long-term supervisor of GP Registrars, and has provided these doctors with a very supportive teaching and training environment as they undertake their advanced GP training.

“Gerard also has a long tradition of training medical students in Cummins, at both his general practice and the hospital. Due to the high-quality learning he had been providing to sixth year medical students, the Adelaide Rural Clinical School approached him a few years ago to widen this to include fifth year medical students.

“He commenced training the fifth year student cohort in 2021, with the students describing their time in Cummins as an enjoyable, rewarding and great learning experience.



“It cannot be underestimated how many future doctors Gerard has encouraged to seriously consider a rural medical career through the quality learning experience he has provided – this is a legacy that deserves significant recognition in itself.”

**RDAA President, Dr Megan Belot, said:** “Gerard is the quintessential rural doctor – someone who has devoted much of his professional and personal life to caring for a community that he truly loves.

“Without the significant service he has provided during the past 30 years, Cummins may very well have been without a doctor at all, and almost certainly without many of the services that are still provided at the local hospital.

“It is not only through his provision of quality medical care that Gerard has supported his community, though – he has also been actively involved in other aspects of the community’s life.

“Just one of many examples is during the COVID lockdown, when Cummins residents – like many other Australians – had to stay at home. In response, Gerard and his daughter Sophie created an online District Talent Show to help the community stay connected during this difficult time.

“Gerard is also giving back to his community and profession by training the next generation of doctors and, in doing so, showing them why rural practice can make for a great medical career. As someone who was raised in Adelaide, and got to experience Rural Medicine himself through clinical placements he undertook as a medical student – he knows how important this type of exposure is.

“Gerard is highly deserving of the Peter Graham ‘Cohuna’ Award, and we warmly congratulate him on receiving it.”

**Dr Quigley said:** “I was very surprised to get the phone call from (then) ACRRM President, Dr Sarah Chalmers, informing me I was to receive this Award. I am aware of previous recipients of the Award and the many Rural Generalists who contribute to their communities, and I feel honoured to have been nominated.

“My own journey through rural practice has seen my interests change and the focus of my practice vary over time, but I have developed a strong relationship with the community I work in.

“I am very lucky to work in a community that needs, respects and cares about me. Working on the Lower Eyre Peninsula has given me the opportunity to build a robust healthcare team and contribute to education and training at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

“I can’t imagine working in another role that would give me the same rewards while allowing the opportunities to raise a family in a great rural community. Having the support of this community, and my wife Jo-Anne and my family, is what anchors me here.

“After all this time I still feel being a Rural Generalist is the best career in Medicine.”

**Dr Gerard Quigley is available for interview.**

**High resolution photos of Dr Quigley are available here:**

[www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/2171](http://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/2171)

[www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/2173](http://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/2173)

**A high resolution photo of Dr Quigley with his award is available here:**

[www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/2177](http://www.rdaa.com.au/documents/item/2177)

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