

15 October 2023

Great women need great health care

International Day of Rural Women

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On International Day of Rural Women, the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) recognises the significant contribution women make to rural communities, and calls on all levels of government to further support them through improved access to health care.

RDAA President Dr Megan Belot said that more needs to be done to ensure women and families in rural and remote Australia have appropriate access to care.

“Rural women are resilient, resourceful and contribute to their families, their businesses, the economy, and the growth of their communities in a multitude of ways,” Dr Belot said.

“Living and working in a rural area, it has struck me just how diverse the female population is in the bush.

“There are women of all ages, different ethnic backgrounds, different educational backgrounds, and making different career and life choices.

“What they all seem to have in common is their resilience, an ability to adapt to change and a common desire to see their communities and families thrive.

“Being able to access the necessary local health services, that meet community need, is essential to enable women and family units to thrive and communities to survive,” Dr Belot said.

“The continual erosion of services in to rural communities, such as the ongoing decline in birthing services across rural Australia, is adding pressure to these communities and the ability of women and families to remain in them.

“Health care leads population change,” Dr Belot said. “If there is no birthing service in a town, then adults planning families are less likely to choose to live there.

“Birthing services underpin the viability of many other health services in a rural hospital and in the community. The loss of these services can have a devastating impact on the regional as a whole, in addition to the individuals affected by this lack of access.”



RDAA continues to call on Government to make rural maternity services a health reform priority, recently coordinating a National Rural Maternity Forum at Parliament House where more than 70 key stakeholders delivered suggested high priority actions to vastly improve access to local maternity care for rural women and their babies.

These included:

- Requesting that rural birthing services is on the agenda at the National Cabinet meeting that will focus on health
- Secure funding for a National Maternity Workforce Plan
- Establishing national minimum standards for rural maternity care access and service
- Reviewing the National Consensus Framework for Rural Maternity Services, and immediate implementation of its updates.

“Many rural and remote women already face significant isolation. They take on more than their share of unpaid work and are often challenged in male-dominated industries, such as mining and agriculture,” Dr Belot said.

“We can’t fix all of that, but we can ensure they have local access to high quality health care.

“Healthcare underpins the viability of the entire community, and the economic success of the region.

“The best way to thank the rural women out there for everything they do is to ensure that they are supported to keep doing it. Appropriate health services are the first step,” Dr Belot said.

Photo of Dr Megan Belot:
[Megan Belot](#)

Available for interview:
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