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## Commissioner - there are better ways than threatening the Bush!

Health Workforce Queensland is very concerned about Commissioner Tony Morris' reported comments that he "is coming around to the idea of economies of scale and that health services in some rural areas may have to be combined. It may be for example that we have to abandon the idea of small, one-doctor hospitals in country towns."

Health Workforce Queensland, Chairman, Dr Brenton Trezise, stated that this "would be the end of at least 52 communities in rural and remote Queensland" these towns include Alpha, Aramac, Dysart, Charleville, Mitchell, Normanton, Quilpie, Texas and Weipa.

Dr Brenton Trezise, stated "it is already widely reported that the health status of rural Australians is lower than our city cousins and this idea would lead to worse health outcomes and preventable deaths."

"If implemented, the loss of small one-doctor hospitals in country towns would have a very significant impact on the highly productive agricultural, mining and tourism sectors and many small towns would suffer further decay of essential services"

"This would mean that there would be no Doctors between Charters Towers and Cloncurry a distance of 650 kms. That is the same as saying there would be no Doctors between Brisbane and Rockhampton, this is unacceptable" commented Dr Trezise.

"The events that occur in rural and remote communities, on the roads and within the mining and agricultural industries, require access to local Doctors and hospital services. The trend to ship everything to Brisbane or the coast is not sustainable" Dr Trezise commented.

Dr Brenton Trezise called on the Commissioner to consider the "Solutions" research paper that identified a range of sustainable strategies to support medical and private healthcare services in rural and remote communities. "There are better ways than threatening the Bush We have considered new ways of delivering primary health care services however, doctors will always be needed in the Bush."

The small, one-doctor hospital in a country town is a sustainable model, if supported correctly and we have a number of models where these towns can be linked to other towns to ensure after hours coverage and professional support. Rural and remote doctors and their families provide part of the backbone of these rural communities.

"Our 'Solutions' have been developed by the adaptation of existing models and creating new models to improve the sustainability of rural medical practice. The models focused on the need to increase the critical mass of Doctors and health professionals to continue to provide a range of rural procedural primary care services."

The use of well supported multidisciplinary health teams that extend the role and responsibilities of nursing and allied health professionals to care for the community is important however, doctors are still needed in rural and remote communities.

The implementation of these new models requires the removal of artificial barriers between State and Federal funded health services so that better services are available to Rural and remote communities. This would include better access by private general practitioners to Queensland hospitals.

Dr Trezise: "Clearly rural and remote communities will have a lot to say about the possible loss of their doctor and hospitals."

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