



DELEGATE'S REPORT

14th December 2004

D1 SCHOOL OF RURAL HEALTH FILE: H2-14 CLR BOWELL

SUMMARY:

Reporting on attendance at a meeting of the University of New South Wales School of Rural Health Mid North Coast Division.



The meeting was held at Port Macquarie on Thursday 18 November 2004.

Professor Richard Henry, Senior Associate Dean, University of New South Wales referred to the recent evaluation of the Rural Clinical Schools Program which was very positive and resulted in the provision of continued funding through the Australian Government's Rural Health Strategy (\$830.2 million over four years for health services to people living in rural and remote Australia).

The findings of the evaluation included;

- The implementation of the program is progressing according to plan with widespread acceptance and commitment by local health services, rural medical practitioners, community representatives, and university medical schools;
- Significant achievements have been realised including:
 - ten schools are operational with medical students undertaking a range of short and long-term clinical placements
 - the substantial development of rural curriculum, capital infrastructure and telecommunications
 - the establishment of community advisory boards at each site to facilitate local community involvement
 - the majority of schools have indicated that the key funding parameter of 25% of medical students and undertaking 50% of their clinical training in rural areas from 2004 will be achieved, and
 - key stakeholders are positive about the initiative and its potential to increase the number of medical practitioners in rural Australia;
- The initiative offers a real opportunity to increase the number of medical students who choose to practice in a rural location;

- An organisational restructure within the Department of Health and Ageing has identified the need to manage the various health workforce undergraduate training programs in one area to ensure that the programs are complementary and opportunities for integration are maximised; and
- There is significant opportunity to more closely align the range of rural focussed programs to ensure that program strengths are maintained and program linkages are strengthened.

Professor Sandy Reid, Director, University of New South Wales School of Rural Health was very complimentary in his remarks concerning the facilities and assistance given to medical students at Kempsey, at Kempsey District Hospital, Durri Aboriginal Medical Service, GP's and Specialists and the community.

As part of the Primary Health Care Program medical students will spend 8 weeks in Kempsey during the final two years of their course.

During the year a successful work experience program was introduced in Port Macquarie, with 45 high school students (including some from Kempsey High Schools) attending a general orientation day followed by a week of focused work experience for the 8 students currently preparing medical entry.

The committee was pleased to hear of the progress with the scholarship program within Kempsey Shire.

The matter of representation on the North Coast Area Health Services Advisory Council was discussed.

I took the opportunity to mention the proposed workshop with people associated with health related interests in Kempsey on Thursday 25 November 2004.

RECOMMENDATION

That the information be noted.

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Councillor J H Bowell