



Media Release

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Doctors hope new Health Minister from rural North East will champion rural health issues

Tasmania State Election

The Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania (RDAT) have welcomed the appointment of Hon Bridget Archer MP on her appointment as Tasmania's Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Dr Aaron Hawkins, RDAT Vice President, said that he was looking forward to working with Minister Archer on the very pressing issues affecting the provision of health care to rural Tasmanians.

"We are excited to be welcoming a new Minister who is herself from the rural north east of Tasmania," Dr Hawkins said.

"As Member for Bass we hope that she will share our concerns for the ongoing cost and sustainability of health services across rural Tasmania, and that her personal understanding of the challenges of accessing care in rural areas will spur on the quick action we desperately need.

"We will be seeking a meeting with Minister Archer at her earliest convenience to discuss some of our key areas of concern, including commitment to reform from within the Tasmanian Health Service (THS) that would support the training, acceptance and employment of Rural Generalist (RG) doctors in our health system.

"We need our government to get behind the national rollout of the Rural Generalist model, which Tasmania currently significantly lags behind on, and support our locally trained RGs with actual jobs in their field.

"These RGs are needed in our large regional hospitals, which are currently relying on regularly rostered locums at a significant cost to the system, and we will be looking to work with Minister Archer to push the THS to develop appropriate mechanisms to enable the introduction of hybrid workforce models so we can improve access to care and patient outcomes for our rural communities.

"We will also be seeking an urgent solution to the cessation of the GP Assist service, which has supported rural doctors and rural patients for years. This was an important virtual care service and without it there will be an increase in avoidable ambulance call outs and hospitalisations."

Other key areas that RDAT will seeking to progress with the new Government include:

- Expansion of the Single Employer Model to 40 places and refinement of arrangements in Tasmania in line with other state offerings.
- Deliver on the previous budget commitment to fund District Hospital Masterplanning.

- Create dedicated Staff Specialist Rural Generalist positions at the Mersey Community Hospital for RGs to work across their full scope of practice in ED, GP, anaesthetics, endoscopy, obstetrics and outpatients.
 - Commit operational funds to the Rural Health Workforce Centre as a the 'home' of rural generalism in Tasmania, including dedicated support for training, skills and rotations in the North West for doctors working in District Hospitals.
 - Build health care worker accommodation in rural and remote areas.
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