

6 December 2021

## Rural doctors thank Greg Hunt for his tireless work as Health Minister

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) thanks outgoing Minister for Health and Aged Care, The Hon Greg Hunt, for his strong leadership throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and for his dedicated service to health over his four years in the portfolio.

Dr Megan Belot, RDAA President, said that Minister Hunt had shown great concern for, and dedication to, ensuring rural Australians have access to quality healthcare, particularly throughout COVID-19.



“Minister Hunt was very concerned that all Australians continued to be able to access health care through this very difficult time,” Dr Belot said.

“The access to telehealth that rural Australians now have and will continue to have post-pandemic is already making a huge difference to their ability to access health care.

“For those who live a distance from town, or who have mobility or transport issues, being able to access consultations via video conference or telephone is often the difference between seeking health care, and not.

“We hope to see an expansion of this service with rural General Practitioners and Rural Generalists working in partnership with non-GP specialists to significantly improve access to specialist care in rural Australia.”

The Government’s Stronger Rural Health Strategy has seen many improvements for rural, and Minister Hunt has been overseeing the rollout of the National Rural Generalist Training Pathway, and the selection and appointment of our second National Rural Health Commissioner, Prof Ruth Stewart.

Minister Hunt is also responsible for working towards reversing the Medicare Freeze, which was killing general practice.

“The release of the Medicare Freeze has been particularly impactful in rural areas, where practices so often operate under tight margins with significant gap payments for the small cohort of patients that can pay, and clinics needing to maintain a much larger scope of practice and level of services than their city counterparts, often sharing the time of their doctors with the local hospitals,” Dr Belot said.

“There is still a way to go to reverse the damage done to rural General Practice by the Freeze, but releasing it did bring many practices back from the cusp of closure.

“While there have been several Ministers for Rural Health over the past five years, Minister Hunt has been the one constant minister allowing discussions to progress with a consistent approach.

“But the job is not done... there is still a budget to deliver and we would expect that improving access to rural medical services will be a focus, given the suite of actions RDAA has put forward under the Rural Medical Workforce Plan, as requested by the Minister.

“We wish Minister Hunt all the best for his future life and career, and hope that his significant expertise in health can continue to be used to benefit the sector,” Dr Belot said.

---

**A high resolution photo of Dr Megan Belot is [available here.](#)**

**The above photo in lower resolution (for online) is [available here.](#)**

**Available for interview:** RDAA President, Dr Megan Belot  
RDAA CEO, Peta Rutherford

**Media contacts:** Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638  
Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890