



Rural and Remote Pharmacy Network Vital



Community Pharmacy is the only health professional service to have expanded its services over the last decade. The current taxpayer funded Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement provides funding of up to \$111 million for rural programs and services which ensure Australians have access to pharmacy services no matter where they live. These programs are funded by the Department of Health and Ageing and managed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. The program and services include:

- Rural Pharmacy Workforce Program (including Emergency Locum Service, CPE Allowance, scholarships and Small Project Funding Scheme)
- Rural Pharmacist Pre-registration Incentive Allowance
- Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance, Rural Pharmacy Start-up Allowance and the Rural Pharmacy Succession Allowance.

These rural programs and services aim to maintain and improve access to quality community pharmacy services for the communities of rural and remote Australia. They also seek to increase the proportion of the total pharmacy workforce starting practice in rural and remote Australia and retain the pharmacy workforce already there.

The support provided to rural and remote pharmacy under the Fourth Agreement has enabled the delivery of the only expanding health service in the bush. Since the inception of the rural pharmacy programs and services there has been an increase in the number of pharmacies in rural Australia (as shown in graph below).

Pharmacy is a vital component in maintaining and improving the health of all Australians, especially those in rural and remote areas. A rural pharmacist is an integral part of the local community and is usually the most accessible health professional offering advice and a diverse range of professional services. Through the continued support of the rural programs and services, pharmacy can continue to provide a vital service for the health and wellbeing of rural and remote Australians.

These programs ensure that Australians pay the same price for their PBS medicines no matter where they live. There are very few products or services that can make that claim. It is vital that support for these programs continues for the benefit of all Australians. Information on the Rural Pharmacy Workforce Programs is available www.ruralpharmacy.com.au

