

nce commitment rewarding challenging camaraderie infinite variety
rity satisfaction connection family community



About the Awards

The Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards were initiated by RWAV in 2005 to recognise and celebrate rural and regional doctors and their partners who have:

- contributed 35 years or more service to their rural communities, or
- made an outstanding contribution in other ways to their rural communities, or
- have worked in a rural community for less than three years and displayed strong community engagement.

The Awards are an annual event and this year, are proudly sponsored by Dorevitch & Gippsland Pathology.



1
Messages

5
35 Years of Service

15
New Rural Doctor

19
Outstanding Contribution

65
Judging Panel

It is with much pleasure that I offer the Victorian Government's congratulations to the recipients of the 2011 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards.

Rural doctors are vital to our rural communities. They provide treatment, care and support that is critical to the wellbeing of individuals and families in rural Victoria. Their dedication and commitment plays an important part in strengthening a community's spirit, and rural doctors are often the heart of their communities.

The Victorian Coalition Government is developing a Rural and Regional Health Plan 2012-2022 to provide a comprehensive health planning framework for health services in rural communities. The health workforce, including rural doctors, will be an important part of this framework.

Once again I congratulate the recipients of these awards and thank them for their invaluable service and contribution to the health of rural communities across Victoria.



*Ted Baillieu MLA
Premier of Victoria*



Message from the Premier
Ted Baillieu MLA

Message from the Minister for Health Hon David Davis MP



The 2011 Rural Doctors' Awards are an important opportunity to acknowledge rural doctors for their commitment and contribution to Victorian communities.

The contribution made by these doctors and their families to Victorian towns is significant. They provide services that sustain and improve the whole community, and their commitment to rural and regional practice illustrates their values and dedication.

In addition to recognising the hard work of these doctors, this is an opportunity to thank them for their leadership, professionalism, perseverance and compassion.

The Baillieu Government appreciates the need to build the rural health workforce and is pleased to be able to support that important work.

I'd like to congratulate the recipients of the 2011 Rural Doctors' Awards and express my deep appreciation for your contribution to a healthy Victoria.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Davis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

*Hon David Davis MP
Minister for Health*

RWAV is again delighted to host the 2011 Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards. The Awards, now in their seventh year, recognise the significant contributions that rural doctors and their families make to their communities.

As you will read in this booklet, each doctor's profile is unique yet many common themes run through each individual story – commitment, passion and the desire to make a real difference are some that come to mind. As we know, rural doctors sustain and nourish their communities, and the Awards are a great way to allow communities to say “thank you”.

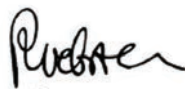
I also hope that the stories of our standout doctors will inspire students and young doctors to consider rural medicine in their career plans. There is no doubt that rural medicine will reward those that choose it.

RWAV is very appreciative of the support we receive for the awards. To our major sponsor, Dorevitch and Gippsland Pathology, who are now in their second year of sponsorship, thank you on behalf of Victorian rural communities.

I would also like to thank the Department of Health for its support this year.

To our panel of judges, Australian Medical Association (Vic), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, Rural Doctors' Association of Victoria, Rural Medical Family Network and Victorian Healthcare Association, your assistance and support is greatly appreciated.

Finally, to all members of Victorian country towns and communities who took the time to nominate their doctor for an Award, we thank you. We know that the doctors are thrilled to be recognised for the fantastic job they do and will continue to do for their rural communities.



*Dr Philip Webster
Chairman – Rural Workforce Agency Victoria*



Message from the RWAV Chairman
Dr Philip Webster

Message from our Sponsor Dorevitch Pathology



Dorevitch Pathology since its early days has by invitation provided pathology services to regional and rural areas, supporting the public hospital system, general practitioners, specialists and local communities, and is proud to continue its support of the Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards.

Demonstrating our commitment to the rural and regional communities, Dorevitch Pathology is the largest provider of pathology services to country areas in Victoria and border regions of NSW. We employ over 450 local regional staff, including pathologists; providing laboratory infrastructure with modern technology and equipment.

By maintaining the regional and rural laboratories we provide immediate and essential services to doctors to ensure that they can perform reliable medicine for their local communities. We highly value the relationship between our local staff and regional doctors. Our pathologists dedicate their services to ensure that they are available to provide clinical support, teaching and leadership in these areas. A number of these pathologists live in

your local communities or travel to rural areas to provide these services.

I would like to sincerely thank all rural doctors for their continued support of Dorevitch Pathology. Your compassion and dedication should never be understated and Dorevitch Pathology is pleased to support the recognition of your achievements through the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria.

I congratulate all regional doctors for their achievements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Moller', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*Neville Moller
Chief Executive Officer
Dorevitch Pathology*

35 Years of Service to Rural Communities

Dr Graeme Bertuch
Dr Graeme Hudson
Dr Suresh Jain
Dr James Reid
Dr Bruce Sterling
Dr Les Thurman
Dr Graeme Wood
Dr Tony Wright



Dr Graeme Bertuch – Ararat



Graeme graduated from Monash University in 1971 and, already interested in country practice, went to Warrnambool for his residency. The next step was to the UK where he attained further qualifications in paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology.

He returned to his family practice at Nunawading in 1975, but felt that the city didn't utilise the skills he had acquired. He approached the Ararat Medical Centre and, after nearly 36 years, he is still practicing in Ararat.

The journey in medicine has seen Graeme practice anaesthetics and emergency medicine, obstetrics and minor surgical procedures. He is now "specialising" in Skin Cancer Medicine, supported by diplomas through the College of Skin Cancer Medicine. Graeme also worked as a locum for the Royal Flying Doctor Service in the mid 1990s, giving him further insight into rural and remote medicine.

Community involvement in a small town is important and Graeme was Medical Officer of Health for Ararat in the early 1980s. He served on the Ararat Hospital Board for 12 years and

was made a Life Governor of East Grampians Health Service (Ararat Hospital) for services to the hospital.

Graeme has visited Willaura, a small town 30 minutes from Ararat, for 21 years. These visits have enabled the hospital and hostel in Willaura to survive and provide a service for patients who have difficulty in getting to Ararat.

He was a driving force for development of the indoor swimming pool in Ararat and takes an interest in local politics. Recently he put his energies into the \$1.3 million expansion of the Ararat Medical Centre, making it a state-of-the-art practice, which will serve the community for the next generation.

His other passion is wine, and Graeme has been involved in the industry since the early 1980s. He and his wife, Carolyn, own and operate the Mount Cole WineWorks, a cellar door and gallery on the Western Highway at Buangor where local wines can be sampled while enjoying Carolyn's fine contemporary art.

Graeme continues to practise nearly full-time and is happy to see where the journey takes him.

"Practising medicine in Ararat has been a fascinating journey observing the cultural, political and environmental influences that mould an individual and the community."

Dr Graeme Hudson – Cowes

35 Years of Service

Graeme Hudson gained his medical qualifications in 1961, following in the footsteps of his father who graduated in 1934, the same year as Weary Dunlop and B K Rank. Graeme's brother was the first of the Monash medical graduates in 1966, continuing the family tradition.

Graeme says "Jan and I returned from our honeymoon for my graduation in December 1961, so we are coming up for two 50 year celebrations".

As a small child, Graeme sometimes accompanied his father on home visits, but as he grew older he was left to wait outside in the car. However, after an unfortunate incident with a bull ant nest, this arrangement was terminated!

Graeme was in his fifth year of medical studies, spending a term in Alexandria, when he realised he wanted to be a country GP.

He spent two years as an RMO at Prince Henry's and a year at the Queen Victoria, and then in 1965 he took his young wife and two small children to Numurkah, where they remained until 1980.

Returning to Camberwell to look after his aging parents, Graeme found suburban practice completely different to the country life he had come to love. There was no surgery, minimal anaesthetics and obstetrics, and a fairly run-of-the-mill general practice.

So in 1995 Graeme and Jan moved to Phillip Island, and he commenced work at the Phillip Island Medical Group, supporting the Warley Hospital, which had a very active accident and emergency unit.

"When I teach students, and we review the activities at the end of the day, I amaze myself with the variety and complexity of cases that we have dealt with. Rural practice is never boring," he says.

Graeme has recently retired and he is finally spending time on his five acre garden. He and Jan like to travel and they plan to do a lot more, as well as spending next winter at their unit in Falls Creek.

Graeme and Jan have four grown up children and nine grandchildren.



"After 50 years I can honestly say that my passion is still rural medicine, and being involved in part of every aspect of a community."

Dr Suresh Jain – Kilmore



Suresh Jain graduated from Gandhi Medical College Bhopal in Central India in 1966 and migrated to Australia in 1970.

He began his rural working life in Hopetoun under the mentorship of Dr Pete Stoutyjik, and then moved to Kilmore in 1974 where he is still practising today.

Suresh has provided emergency assistance, undertaking surgical procedures and delivering babies. In the early years he administered anaesthetics, took x-rays and attended many motor vehicle accidents when the Hume Highway travelled through Kilmore township and seat belts weren't compulsory.

He ran the Kilmore and District Hospital for a number of years when there were no other medical professionals to share the load. He also found time to mentor students, Registrars and colleagues. Basically, if you asked him to do something, he would do it.

Suresh met Jeannette in Hopetoun and they married in 1975. They have four grown up children who are all married and working in Melbourne.

He has been involved with the local Rotary Club since 1979, serving as President twice. He was on the Board of Management of Kilmore Hospital for about 9 years, during which time the Caledonia Nursing Home was built next to the hospital. He was Medical Officer of Health to Kilmore and Broadford Shires, Medical Officer to Assumption College, Kilmore, and the Kilmore International School, where he looks after the boarders.

Suresh has been involved in the continued growth of the Kilmore Hospital, which now has a modern operating theatre and delivery rooms. He was also involved in the establishment of the first nursing home and then hostel in Kilmore with 30 beds in each.

Suresh says "Practising in the country is very fulfilling. I belong to one big family and have a very supportive team of colleagues to treat the sick in the local hospital. Most patients hate to travel to city for treatment, preferring to stay locally if possible."

Suresh is a keen gardener and has 10 acres to tend with the help of Jeannette and a part-time gardener. They have a beautiful old home, which is frequently used to hold Rotary dinners.

"In the country there is a huge variety of work, and you have to use a bit of lateral thinking and make do with the resources available at any given time."

Dr James Reid – Cobden

35 Years of Service

James Reid was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. He initially studied law and, in 1951, won a United Nations Scholarship in Economics, which took him to Belgium for a year.

He returned to Scotland, gaining his qualifications in medicine at St. Andrews University in 1961. Thereafter, he undertook internships in various Scottish hospitals, covering general medicine, orthopaedics, trauma, obstetrics and anaesthetics, followed by a few months as a general practice trainee.

James worked as an anaesthetist at the Isle of Man Hospital for a year, then spent two years in West Africa filling the dual roles of Area Medical Officer for Tiko Province, West Cameroon, and Medical Officer in Charge at the Tiko General Hospital.

He was then on the move again and off to the Channel Islands as Anaesthetist Registrar at the Jersey Hospital for a year.

This was his last stop before moving to Murrayville, Australia with his wife Yvonne and two young children, where they spent the next three years. James was the only doctor and,

although the population was just 300 people, the practice covered a considerable area.

James has spent the last 42 years in the Western District town of Cobden, providing anaesthetic and obstetric services to the local hospital, and assisting with theatre lists at the Warrnambool Base Hospital. Since the Cobden Hospital closed in 1998, he continues visits to the aged care facilities, provides on-call services, and is a VMO at the Base Hospital.

He has three daughters. Ruth was born in Scotland, Kathryn was born in Africa, and Janet was born in Australia. Janet is a GP in Ocean Grove. She does locums for her father and often hears of how he delivered this or that patient as well as their children's babies.

James is nominated for his devotion and dedication to his patients over a long period of time, and his encouragement to young and aspiring doctors.

In his spare time, James follows his life-long passion for writing, which all started when, at the age of nine, he won an award for his essay on the not-so-decent life of John Knox.



“I have spent so many years sharing the joys and disappointments of the Cobden community, but I am always warmed afresh by its friendship and openness.”



Dr Bruce Sterling – Shepparton

For Bruce Sterling, the seeds of medicine must have been sown around 1954 when he won a primary school fancy dress show as “Doc” (and his brother as “Dopey”) of the seven dwarfs.

Bruce graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1971, and spent the next two years as an intern at the Mooroopna Base Hospital, before commencing with Lister House Medical Centre in 1974 where he continues his unbroken career in Shepparton to this day.



One of the attractions of rural practice was the ability to participate in surgery, obstetrics and anaesthetics. But after a few years, Bruce became aware that there were many patient problems which could not be mended with a pill or an operation. So began an interest in mental health which is now a big part of his practice.

Bruce married Leona 41 years ago and they have three daughters and four grandchildren.

It was a big “ask” to take Leona away from a senior position in the music department of MacRobertson Girls’ School, but the Sterlings have never looked back.

Music has always been an integral part of family life. Leona continues as a music educator and

is involved in community music, and two of the girls hold principal roles in orchestras overseas. Their eldest daughter (also a fine amateur musician) is a detective in Perth.

In the 1970s, Bruce was one of the co-founders of the Shepparton Private Hospital. He is the inaugural President of the Shepparton Child Protection Society and a Wanganui Park Secondary College Council President, championing healthy school canteens long before it became fashionable to do so.

Bruce is a bit of a musical talent himself, involved in theatre productions with the Turaton music group, played piano at various community events and public concerts, and is a current Board member with the Goulburn Valley Concert Orchestra. In the 1980s, he wrote and presented many stage and musical items for the local hospital reviews.

“I love my practice and the wonderful staff and colleagues – it is very easy to be happy in such a wonderful, supportive environment,” Bruce says. “The one other absolute essential for happiness is my wife and family.”

“Shepparton has given us back much more than we have given to it. I love everything about the community, my practice, my colleagues and my wonderful family.”

Dr Les Thurman – Moe

35 Years of Service

Les Thurman was born in England and always knew that he wanted to be a doctor.

He gained his qualifications at the University of Birmingham and, after completing hospital work in England, made his way to Australia, working in Tasmania and Queensland.

Les came to a locum GP post in Yallourn almost by chance, after he'd met a doctor in Queensland who was working in the area. Despite its reputation for 'having so much coal dust you couldn't hang clothes on the washing line', Les loved it.

He eventually established his own practice and later amalgamated with Tanjil Place Medical in neighbouring Moe, where he remains to this day.

Les worked at Latrobe Valley Hospital until its closure and was an FMP Supervisor from the early days of the program, with the proviso from the Medical Director saying "You'll look after the new doctors, won't you Les?"

Les has worked with medical students, was at one time Secretary of the local subdivision of the AMA, and was for many years Medical

Director of the Latrobe Valley Palliative Care group.

The country lifestyle is clearly inherited, as Les has children and grandchildren in Mildura and Bendigo. Today he is lucky enough to live in a small South Gippsland town with his partner, Lila, and to share in the lives of her three children.

Les loves gardening, in particular growing his own vegetables, and has an interest in genealogy, cosmology, and English history of the Middle Ages. He recently joined the University of the Third Age.

Les enjoys being involved with his patients, getting to know them as people and to see them through each generation. Over the years he has seen more elderly patients than the average, and he has enjoyed listening to their life stories.

He counts himself lucky to have worked with so many talented, interesting and knowledgeable people over the course of his life and career.



"I have learnt more from my patients, colleagues, and life itself, than I was ever taught at university."

Dr Graeme Wood – Kerang

Graeme Wood graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1972 and commenced his working life in rural Victoria with various postings, including Echuca, Ballarat and Ararat.

In 1976 he moved to Kerang, joining a tiny clinic (one of only three at the time), and after eight years the practice relocated to the purpose-built Fitzroy Street Medical Clinic which now houses 10 consulting rooms plus three treatment rooms.



Like so many country doctors, Graeme has been involved in a wide variety of cases from home visits 30 kilometres out of town, unplanned home deliveries, bull-gorings and fish-stuck-in-throat cases, to MVA retrievals.

“Who would want to be stuck in a suburban clinic?” he asks.

Amongst his toolkit, Graeme has skills in obstetrics, after hours and emergency care, anaesthetics and school immunisations. He has encouraged and helped teach Registrars and medical students, and the practice has become a well-recognised teaching clinic.

Through living and working in a rural community, Graeme has seen the benefits of all round team work between clinics, hospital staff and other services.

“Country life can be so rewarding,” he says. “Being an integral part of the local community is important – to walk down the street and smile, or stop and chat, and share good times and bad with the locals.”

Graeme has been involved in many local projects, including the establishment of Kerang Christian Community School over 20 years ago.

Graeme and Carolyn delivered meals-on-wheels for four years and now teach Religious Education to primary school students throughout the district as part of their many church activities.

Graeme says “Country Kerang has been a wonderful place to practise, to bring up our family, and now to approach retirement with a deep sense of ‘it’s been well worth it’. Considering rural medicine? Go for it!”

“Feeling as though I was meant to do medicine, my very quiet self found country general practice increasingly attractive, although I never envisaged the ‘two years to help out’ would extend to 35.”

Dr Tony Wright – Maffra

35 Years of Service

Tony Wright qualified as a doctor in London in 1970. He held various hospital posts in general surgery, general medicine, orthopaedics, emergency, neurology and ophthalmology from 1970 to 1975 throughout the UK.

He came to Maffra as a locum in 1975 and continued with the Maffra Medical Group for the next 22 years. In 1997 he established the Johnson Street Clinic, which is where he is today. Johnson Street Clinic was the second practice in the area to achieve full accreditation and this status has been maintained since.

Tony is married to Jennie, an Australian he met in London, a former Nurse Unit Manager, and now the Practice Manager at Johnson Street, and they have three children – Tim, George and Ben, all of whom attended St Anne's and Gippsland Grammar. He has one granddaughter, Isabella, and another grandchild on the way. Tony fulfilled the role of rowing coach at the Grammar School from 1987 to 2004.

He has been a Chairman of the Maffra Shire Council International Year of the Child Committee; a Member of Maffra Apex Club – President (twice), Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor at various times; Stretton

Park Board of management President (Aged Care Hostel) for 12 years; a Foundation Fellow of ACRRM; founding Board member of East Gippsland Division of General Practice (Chairman 1997- 2001); and a member of several workforce and immunisation committees.

Tony has participated in talkback radio (initially in response to the anti-vaccination program) as "Doctor Tony" on ABC Gippsland, and later ABC Melbourne 774, broadcast nationally.

He is also actively involved with the Central Gippsland Health Service and Maffra District Hospital.

Tony is still working full-time in general practice and is involved with medical procedures such as obstetrics as he is one of only two local GP/Obstetricians in the area. He is now delivering second generation babies. He performs minor surgical procedures at his clinic and at CGHS, and provides after hours on-call services which, at times, may require emergency response.

Tony enjoys spending time with his family, sailing, travel, carpentry and photography.



"Something to remember in medicine is that 'common things are common'. It's a good reminder to drum into the students we teach."



New Rural Doctor

Dr Charu Banerji
Dr Robert North
Dr Daniel Otuonye



Dr Charu Banerji – Epsom



Charu Banerji came to Australia on a whim. She was 40 something, settled, and not really looking for a sea-change. However, her husband was offered a position in Australia so they came down under for a visit.

“The first thing that struck me about this continent was the space, how big the sky was, and I could actually see the horizon, something so alien in the bustling cities of India,” she says.

“The second thing I noticed was the smiles – everybody smiles here, the babies, youngsters, oldies, and they smile with the warmth and uninhibited brilliance of the famous Aussie sunshine.”

“I started working in Epsom about two years ago. Each day is interesting, demanding, elating, frustrating, rewarding, exciting and wonderful. I would not change this for any other job in the world. When I come home, my husband complains that I talk the wooden legs off the lounge suite. It takes me a couple of hours to wind down”.

Charu credits the ease with which she has settled into work and the community as a tribute to her colleagues: the other GPs, the receptionists, and the nurses, as well as the patients who make it all worthwhile.

Charu says “The greatest of my support networks is my family, the spoilt cat, the dog with a dependent personality, the sporadically surviving plants, the glued-to-technology son and my wonderful, supportive husband.”

“Being a GP is almost like having a love affair. If you are not involved enough with your work, it is no fun, and if you are, it breaks your heart. I have come to love the people and the community I work with, and it really isn’t work anymore ... it’s what I do... as naturally and normally as breathing.”

“General practice in rural Australia is about thinking hard, thinking fast and thinking smart in the face of varied clinical situations, and yet keeping your heart open to feel the angst of the people who so trustingly put their confidence in you.”

Dr Robert North – Seymour

Robert North grew up and was educated in Dubbo, New South Wales. His father was a rural General Surgeon, so Rob developed a taste for rural medicine from a young age.

He studied medicine at Newcastle University and then moved to Tamworth for his intern and resident years. However, he couldn't decide what field of medicine to move into so did a lot of ED locum work and became addicted to travelling. "I was asked to cover a weekend for some perpetually on-call GPs in Coonabarabran, accepted, loved it, and soon moved there. I had found my vocation – rural general practice."

In 2005 Rob moved to Melbourne, but city life didn't have the same appeal, so he moved to Seymour and continued his general practice training. In 2008 he completed his advanced obstetric training in Bendigo, where he met his wife, Jodie. "We now live in Seymour and our family has grown to six."

"I have always been passionate about maintaining rural services and get distressed

when yet another service gets downgraded or shut down. I wanted to do my bit, so obstetrics is what I decided to get involved in, probably because it is the part of rural general practice subject to the greatest decline recently, also because it is a very rewarding and an enjoyable field to work in, providing real family medicine."

Rob is now a partner in the Seymour Medical Clinic and has started a travel clinic as an affiliate of Travel Clinics Australia. The practice is also a strong teaching clinic with GP Registrars and medical students.

Rob's other interests are travel, outdoor activities and, particularly, a combination of the two. In 2010 he climbed Mount Everest, completing the seven summits, reaching the highest point on each continent.



"The diversity of work, nature of the rural community, and the lifestyle, all appeal to me."



Dr Daniel Otuonye – Bairnsdale

Daniel Otuonye gained his primary medical qualifications at the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria and completed his fellowship of the RACGP in 2009.

Daniel joined the Bairnsdale Medical Group practice in 2007. He has been a VMO since his arrival in Gippsland at the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service, and is also involved with the medical care of his elderly patients at the local nursing homes.



He consults with acute emergency patients in his role with the hospital and he has a strong following in his work as a GP/obstetrician, looking after patients in the ante and post-natal period. At the clinic he is involved with the general day-to-day care of patients.

“I love my job! Being able to live and work in one of the best regions in Victoria and, at the same time, contributing to the medical workforce in this unique field of medicine called general practice is just great,” Daniel says.

He enjoys soccer and plays for the local Bairnsdale Soccer Club, however his favourite past-time is creating oil paintings on canvas. Daniel also enjoys gardening and helping family and community still living in Nigeria.

Daniel is married to Amanda and they have two lovely children.

“Moving to the welcoming community in Bairnsdale to become a General Practitioner still remains one of the best decisions I have made in my life.”

Outstanding Contribution to Rural Communities



Dr Solange Adad
Dr David Appleton
Dr Peter Barker
Dr Graham Bromwich
Dr Robert Campbell
Dr Robert Carson
Dr Paul Carter
Dr Alex Cato
Dr Yvonne Cymbalist
Dr Carolyn De Poi
Dr Daniel de Villiers
Dr Paul Dodds
Dr Mauricio Haddad
Dr Christopher Hengel
Dr Max Higgs
Dr Phil Huguenin
Dr Shaker Issa
Dr Dennis Joyce
Dr Peter Keppel
Dr Harry Lee
Dr Helen Malcolm
Dr Leon Malzinskas
Dr Nola Maxfield
Dr Roslyn McCallum

Dr Iain McConachie
Dr Christopher Medley
Dr Brian Murphy
Dr Gerald Murphy
Dr Alexandra Murray
Dr Robert Peterson
Dr Ian Pettigrew
Dr Claire Pickett
Dr David Pierce
Dr Andrew Slutzkin
Dr Daryl Smith
Dr Alan Soward
Dr Ken Tate
Dr Nick Thies
Dr Will Twycross
Dr David Tynan
Dr John Urie
Dr Bronwyn Williams
Dr Robert Ziffer



Dr Solange Adad – Shepparton

Solange Adad completed her qualifications in Brazil in 1981 and was first registered to practice in Australia in 1999.

Since she moved here, she has spent the last 12 years working in rural Victoria, with time spent in Yarrawonga, Mooroopna and Shepparton, plus six months at the Tenant Creek Aboriginal Health Service in the Northern Territory.

In rural areas she has learnt the important and indispensable role of nursing staff and allied health professionals supporting rural doctors in their care of patients.



She has a passion to teach and pass her knowledge on to the next generation of students and doctors. Students who spend time with her have commented how much they have learnt.

Solange says “It’s great to teach medical students in a rural area where the patients are keen to contribute to student development and, as we practice holistic medicine, we’re often dealing with a few generations of the same family.”

She has informally assisted many overseas doctors with the process of having their qualifications recognised in Australia and, in many cases, has attracted them to rural areas.

Each year she spends four weeks as a locum working in remote settings, usually in an Aboriginal centre, giving the overworked doctors a break and caring for under-served communities.

Solange has served on the Board of the Goulburn Valley Division of General Practice since 2008 and is a member of the MPBV, RACGP, AMA, and the MDAV.

In 2009 she received a certificate as a participant in the Harvard Macy Leadership in the Medical Education Course.

Solange’s partner, Paul, works in community health and, together, they enjoy travelling, dancing and socialising with friends.

“It’s very rewarding to help students with their professional growth – passing on my experience and using our shared knowledge to improve patient care in rural areas.”

Dr David Appleton – Mallacoota

Outstanding Contribution

David graduated from Monash University in 1978, and worked at both the Alfred and Royal Children's Hospitals before travelling to India where he did some voluntary medical work. He then spent time in the UK undergoing further training in paediatrics, O & G, anaesthetics, and minor surgery.

It was in the Southampton paediatric oncology unit that he met, worked with, and ultimately married Diana. They returned to Victoria to spend a year in general practice in Mansfield, where they both fell in love with rural life, later moving to Bairnsdale where they lived for 17 years.

His work included a VMO role at the Bairnsdale hospital, A & E (which still continues), obstetrics and anaesthetics.

David and Di joyously adopted siblings Brian and Cherie, and have made a wonderful and fulfilled family life.

Some seven years ago, a more remote life called, and the couple moved to Mallacoota where David works in a small group practice.

"Work in a remote community is very much team based," he says. "Whether it is at a roadside accident with police, ambulance, the SES and CFA, or in the home of a dying patient with RDNS and home care providers, I feel very much part of a team where each member has their own important role."

He enjoys being part of the development of junior doctors by hosting and mentoring the next generation through the John Flynn program and working as a GP Registrar Supervisor.

David is actively involved in community education through talks to students at the local college, and participates in men's health promotion events.

"With the mountains, lakes and ocean on our doorstep, the life/work balance is just about right, although a third practice partner would give me extra time to catch more fish, sail some more and make some more timber furniture."



"We are often invited by patients into the heart of their families – with this comes responsibility, and can provide many of the great rewards of general practice."



Dr Peter Barker – Cohuna

Peter Barker studied medicine at Monash University from 1974, always with the aim of working in the bush. In 1977 he was part of the inaugural trachoma program in the NT with Fred Hollows and also spent time with the army in PNG.

In 1980 Peter worked at the Box Hill Hospital, with rotations to Bairnsdale, where he renewed his taste for country life.



Taking up a post in Cohuna in 1983, Peter found himself under the mentorship of Peter Graham – a formidable bush doctor. Some 28 years later, Peter now owns the Cohuna Clinic and is still as committed and passionate as the day he arrived. He estimates he has had over 280,000 consultations, helped over 1,000 babies into the world, administered over 5,000 anaesthetics and, for 20 years, has supervised joint replacement surgery with not a single major infection.

Peter says “For every birth in the country it seems there is a death, and I feel privileged to have held the hands of so many patients and friends on that journey at life’s end.”

“It is only with the support of great staff that a clinic like this works,” he adds. “At times it can appear a bit chaotic, but everyone gets triaged and seen.”

During the drought, Peter bulk-billed patients for 12 months, showing solidarity and support for his community. Similarly that solidarity and a skilful caring team have allowed him to develop both personally and professionally.

Cohuna has limited facilities and funding, so much depends on the initiative of Peter and his colleagues.

A wonderful variety of personalities has been on the ward rounds at Cohuna, including hundreds of students and many fine doctors, amongst them Peter’s first trainee, Tim McArdle.

“I am proud to be considered the leader at the clinic and the hospital, but I consider all the doctors and staff to be friends and equals on the Cohuna team.”

“Just like the very first day that I worked here, I wake up wondering what today will bring. I’m glad to be a country GP in Cohuna.”

Dr Graham Bromwich – Bairnsdale

Outstanding Contribution

Graham Bromwich has been a procedural GP in Bairnsdale for 32 years.

Graham says “My parents worked hard as newsagents and shoe shop retailers in regional Victoria in my formative years, providing myself and three sisters with the chance of a good education.”

“I knew I wanted to be a country GP at about 16 years of age, and my second year as an RMO in a big Melbourne public hospital erased any doubts. From there, I tried to gain appropriate obstetrics and anaesthetic training to be useful, as I was keen to practise cradle-to-grave medicine.”

“When not working, my wife, Jan, and I would spend weekends driving to different parts of Victoria checking out the towns with GP jobs advertised. We moved to Bairnsdale in 1979 because both the job and the city seemed ideal. There has not been a moment of regret.

“I am indebted to my older and now younger colleagues for the warmth and support extended over all that time.

“I see much of rural practice as a succession of partnerships: partnerships with colleagues, other workmates, patients and one’s own family. Being an integral part of such a community is rewarding. Your patients become your friends and your friends become your patients.”

“My wife has always been a great support to me. We have raised eight wonderful children, including the last three at once in 1991!”

Graham has always had a love of sport – his father was an Australian champion tennis player. This enjoyment has turned into great involvement and experiences in many local clubs, as a participant, as a parent of participants, in administrative and professional capacities. “If you are watching your daughter play netball or your son play football you are the club doctor – that is just the way it is.”

Following a personal medical hiccup early this year, Graham has ceased most of his afterhours work, but still tends to his general practice patients on weekdays.

“This gives us more time to spend with our grandchildren – seven so far but it increases every year or two,” says Graham. “I would miss the people too much if I was to retire.”



Dr Robert Campbell – Ballarat

Rob Campbell graduated in medicine from Monash University in 1985, after previously completing a BSc (Hons) in Biochemistry.

He spent five years at Ballarat Base Hospital as a resident and almost a year in Kent, UK, undertaking further obstetrics training. He returned to Ballarat where he joined the Ballarat Group Practice in 1992 and subsequently became a partner.



Initially, Rob was a VMO to the Emergency Department and served on the local Western Region Ambulance Committee. He was also a Visiting Doctor to the local Red Cross Blood Bank.

Rob sat on the Medical Advisory Committee for St John of God Hospital in Ballarat for over 10 years, and in 2008 was appointed to the Board of Ballarat Health Services for a term of three years.

He was a locum for the RFDS in Broken Hill in 1996 and a medical volunteer in the hills of East Timor in 2005, which he found most confronting!

Rob's medical interests include internal medicine, paediatrics and palliative care. He still visits his patients in hospital and has a significant nursing home caseload. Like many colleagues, he is involved in teaching final year medical students and GP Registrars, and he may become more formally involved in teaching in the near future.

His outside interests include wine and food, general and medical history, running, bushwalking and spending time with his family – his wife, Maria, and sons, Hugh and Andrew, along with a menagerie of animals.

Rob has lived in Ballarat for nearly 26 years and considers it a wonderful place to bring up a family and enjoy all that a semi-rural lifestyle has to offer.

“In a rural setting we are presented with an infinite variety of medical issues, situations, and patients. Over time it turns into an extended community family that shares everything.”

Dr Robert Carson – Maryborough

Robert Carson graduated from Melbourne University in 1978. During his residency at Geelong Hospital, he trained in procedural medicine to enable him to practice in rural locations.

He worked in northern and central Victoria, and settled in a rural general practice in Maryborough in 1983 with his wife Jenny, who is also a General Practitioner.

Rob's work involves both general practice and providing VMO services to the local hospital, where his duties include emergency medicine, obstetrics, anaesthetics, minor surgery and inpatient care.

His interest in teaching began early in his general practice career and he has welcomed students into his practice since 1984. He continues to enjoy this aspect of medicine and is now involved with Monash University as a part-time lecturer while training students in theatre, emergency medicine and general practice.

Rural general practice is never dull and emergencies frequently arise.

Rob achieved unexpected and unbidden notoriety in 2009 when he and his colleague, David Tynan, were involved in performing burr hole surgery on a child with an extradural haemorrhage.

The resolution of this situation, which occurred in a rural location on a Friday evening, was the result of a coordinated team response, involving specialist consultation, a colleague's assistance, the local hospital emergency care and maintenance staff, and the paramedic retrieval service. All of which shows the breadth of responsibilities of rural general practice.

His satisfaction in medicine has always been found in the companionship of colleagues, young and old, and in being a community GP just like his Dad.

Rob and Jenny have four children. His hobbies are golf, sailing, and boat maintenance, and his current personal challenge is making delicious pizzas in an outdoor pizza oven.



"When I was in primary school I realised I wanted to be a doctor, just like my Dad."

Dr Paul Carter – Lancefield

Paul Carter attained his MBBS at Guys Hospital, London, in 1970 and then trained as a pathologist. He moved to Australia to give his family a better way of life and joined the staff of the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

After several years he realised that he wished to spend his career with “real” patients and, having given up his microscope, he moved to the country where he has been in general practice for the last 25 years.



In Romsey, Paul initiated and ran a GP Registrar and undergraduate training program, and for many years delivered babies, took his own x-rays, did his own pathology, undertook minor surgical procedures, provided mental health counselling and hypnotherapy, and also performed much of the afterhours cover.

Paul is a strong advocate for the benefits of accreditation and is a Senior Surveyor with GPA – a role that has taken him across Australia, including indigenous communities and remote mining towns.

Paul opened the Lancefield Country Practice in 2009 to provide cover for a town that had no service. He wished to further his dream of delivering preventative medicine and has developed programs for a wide range of medical and social issues under his Life Choices banner.

He lives with his wife, Gillian, on their farm in the Macedon Ranges. Paul freely acknowledges that his hectic, involved lifestyle would simply not be possible without her unconditional support as well as that of his wonderful staff.

Away from medicine, Paul is a well-regarded portrait painter – he has entered the Archibald prize for the last 10 years or so. He has never been a finalist but his works have been hung in the prestigious ‘Hidden faces of the Archibald’ for the last five years.

He is also a published author – he has written a book of short stories about life as a country GP, with a sequel currently at the publishers.

“There can be few more enjoyable, or indeed privileged, positions than being a small town country doctor and I have enjoyed every minute of it. Not only is the work challenging and varied but I have also been lucky enough to serve a community that measures its worth by what can be given rather than what can be taken.”

Dr Alex Cato – Mildura

Outstanding Contribution

Alex Cato gained his medical degree at the University of Western Australia Medical School in 1970 and commenced surgical training as a Resident/Registrar at the Royal Perth Hospital before moving to Melbourne to train in urology.

Alex has been a visiting urologist to the Mildura district for over 29 years, as well as servicing other countries through the Pacific Islands Project of AusAID and the Royal College of Surgeons of Australasia. He has just retired from the RAAF Specialist Reserve after 30 years of supporting the members of the ADF. Alex is also on the staff of the Alfred Hospital.

Alex was the first visiting urologist to Mildura and has spent the last three decades flying his own aircraft, currently a Piper Chieftain, to and from Mildura for his monthly visits. This initiative has inspired a visiting surgeon to take up flying lessons and one day fly himself around the country. For many, many years, without Alex's commitment to fly to Mildura each month, there would have been no regular urology services in the district.

Alex mentors the local doctors in the countries he visits in his work with the Pacific Islands Project and the junior doctors in the ADF in his capacity as an RAAF reservist.

Alex's involvement with the RAAF Specialist Reserve earned him a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for exceptional service as the Director of Air Force Health Reserves – Personnel and Senior General Surgeon – deployable surgical elements within the Australian Defence Force.

He is well respected in the Mildura community by both staff and patients. He's a quiet and considerate man who instils confidence in others, working at both the public and private hospitals, as well as undertaking consulting work. He is always willing to take on extra patients and won't turn anyone away.

Alex has mentored and opened up opportunities for other health professionals and provided a succession plan for his role within the community.

Alex is married to Jenny and they have three adult children.



“I have always been impressed by the skills and resourcefulness of the rural health workforce and, by just being there, I have seen them able to serve our community to the highest standards.”



Dr Yvonne Cymbalist – Horsham

Yvonne Cymbalist grew up in Pascoe Vale, Melbourne attending Strathmore High School, and surprised everyone when she was accepted into medicine. She graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1979, and worked in several hospitals in Melbourne as part of the Family Medicine Program. In 1983, Yvonne worked as a Registrar in obstetrics under the expert guidance of Eric Miller at Wimmera Base Hospital in Horsham, 300 kilometres northwest of Melbourne.



In 1984, Yvonne returned to Horsham with her husband, commencing the Family Planning Clinic in Stawell, then at the hospital in Horsham, undertaking locums in Dimboola under the guiding hand of John Pickering.

Yvonne joined the Mynara Medical Centre in Horsham in 1991. She has a particular interest in women's health and paediatrics, and her waiting and consulting rooms could be mistaken for a toy shop, much to the delight of the children who attend her practice.

Yvonne works at the local hospital, visiting patients and providing ongoing care. She enjoys

the detective work in solving patient's clinical problems and is renowned for chasing patients' symptoms until she has made the diagnosis.

She enjoys meeting her patients in the supermarket and catching up, and being a part of their lives.

Mynara Medical Centre, now a single doctor practice, has recently relocated into the new Wimmera Medical Centre.

Yvonne's life revolves around her community. She is a mentor to medical students through the Deakin University IMMERSe program one day per week and has a fortnightly segment on the local ABC radio station talking about health issues.

Yvonne is married to Alan Wolff, the Director of Medical Services at the hospital. They have two children, both of whom attended local schools and now live in Melbourne.

Yvonne is a car enthusiast and is always willing to talk about cars. She also has a passion for food, crime shows and mysteries.

"I'm constantly fascinated at the way children are hesitant, reserved and often silent on their first visit – resisting my every approach. Yet, when they return, they magically know where everything is and want to take over the practice!"

Dr Carolyn De Poi – Beechworth

Carolyn was born into an Italian migrant family and grew up in inner city Melbourne. Through high school she wanted to teach as a career, but on the advice of a teacher she enrolled in medicine at the University of Melbourne and loved it instantly.

After graduation Carolyn completed a BMedSci and during that year met Mark Walpole, a viticulturist and farmer. He introduced her to the possibility of a rural life, and they have been together ever since.

Carolyn says “My residency years began at RMH but I worked in a variety of places. I completed my GP training with obstetric skills and a special interest in mental health and women’s health.”

She moved to the farm in Whorouly South in 1994 and joined the Beechworth Surgery, working full-time and providing VMO services to the local hospital. She has been on QA and medical advisory committees, and is an RACGP examiner.

“General practice in Beechworth is varied and sometimes challenging but involves continuity of patient care and connections with patients, their families and the community,” she says.

“I am regularly surprised, enthused, inspired and sometimes challenged with my work in rural general practice. It is never boring.”

“I like that and the fact that rural GPs see medical presentations first. It is real medicine. The resilience of the rural community of Beechworth is extraordinary. It is a privilege to work here.”

Five years ago Carolyn decided to join Bogong Regional Training Network as a medical educator. She trains GP Registrars and International Medical Graduates in North East Victoria as well as continuing her involvement with medical student education.

Juggling two jobs can be a struggle but Carolyn says it’s worth it. “I love teaching and the variety this work brings to my professional life. These doctors in training and their stories are awe inspiring.”

On a personal note, Carolyn is involved in farming and the establishment of her family vineyard and wine business. “This supports my interests in food, wine, travel and bushwalking,” she adds.

“Despite our busy lives, we manage to combine these activities regularly. It is amazing where you can find grapevines growing around the world!”



Dr Daniel de Villiers – Maryborough

Daniel de Villiers gained his qualifications in South Africa and spent 11 years as a medical officer in the Defence Force on active duty in Angola, working in frontline conditions far from civilisation.

He came to Australia in 2001 and commenced a journey around Victoria working in Maryborough, Swan Hill, Leongatha, Rutherglen, Kyneton and Mildura.

He settled in Maryborough and has worked as a GP and GP Obstetrician in the community for the last 10 years.



Daniel says “My greatest joy comes from developing and nurturing longstanding relationships of trust with my patients.”

“Rural service allows us to reach out to those most vulnerable and in most need of care. That’s why I’ve endeavoured to work in places and provide services that would make a real and measurable difference to the community I serve.”

Daniel is an active member of the West Victoria Division of General Practice. He was elected as a Board member in October 2002 and Chair in 2004 – a position he still holds.

He is a GP supervisor and GP workshop presenter for Beyond Medical Education, has contributed to the establishment of the Obstetric Small Learning Group, is a Board member of the local registered postgraduate training provider Continuing Medical Education, trains and mentors junior medical staff, lectures at Monash University and was recently appointed to the local FEMO.

Daniel is married to Annie and they have three children. The family is proudly involved in community groups and the local church.

“I gain a very deep sense of satisfaction in being able to provide procedural obstetrics and some surgical procedures to patients within their own environment.”

Dr Paul Dodds – Corryong

Outstanding Contribution

Paul Dodds graduated with first class honors from Monash University in 1986, receiving the Board of Management Prize from Prince Henry's Hospital. He completed his first two years of post graduate training through Queen Victoria Medical Centre and Monash Medical Centre. During this time he met his wife to be, Gabby Bourke.

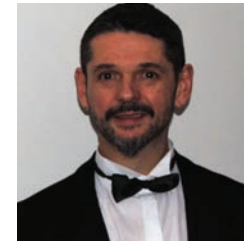
In 1989 Paul and Gabby left Melbourne to work in Cairns in Queensland. This led to 12 years of work and training in Northern Australia, working in remote hospitals and for Community Directed Aboriginal Medical Services throughout Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Far North Queensland.

During this time Paul gained experience and skills in obstetrics, anaesthetics, and acute and chronic healthcare that he saw as essential to a long term commitment to rural medicine. Also during this time Paul and Gabby married and were blessed with four wonderful children, Madeleine, Sebastian, Geneveive and Joseph.

In 2001 while living in Broome, Paul and Gabby decided it was time to return to South East Australia to be closer to their extended family. Paul and Gabby were fortunate to accept a position at Upper Murray Health and Community Services (UMHCS) in Corryong.

UMHCS is a multipurpose service with a commitment to multidisciplinary teamwork and community direction within the health care setting. This type of practice is particularly suited to Paul's previous experiences and philosophy with regard to rural medicine.

Paul and Gabby have also made a firm commitment to their chosen community. They have spent extended periods as School Board Chairperson and Parents Club President at the Sacred Heart School, Corryong, and have also been involved with various community and parish groups.



“To me, rural medicine is all about being connected and involved with community. In my view this connection with community results in both the greatest rewards and challenges a health professional can experience.”



Dr Mauricio Haddad – Wonthaggi

Mauricio Haddad was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1953, and gained his first degree in medicine in 1978, adding specialties in orthopaedics in 1987 and sport medicine in 1995.

He was the Chairman of the Argentinean Sport Medicine Society from 1992 until 2004, and authored a chapter of the book: Pharmacology of the Doping.

In January 2004, Mauricio arrived in Australia with his wife Claudia and three sons – Gonzalo, Rodrigo and Santiago – and commenced work with Southern Health at the Monash Medical Centre.



In January 2009, he began work at the South Gippsland Family Medicine Centre and it soon became apparent to him that many of his young patients were drug dependent.

Given the huge demand in the South Gippsland region, Mauricio undertook training to deliver the Methadone Program and is the only doctor in the area supporting these patients, which currently number over 120.

Mauricio works closely with Bass Coast Regional Health and other medical service providers supporting a growing number

of patients who, given their rural location, wouldn't have access to the help they need.

As well as providing services to those who are suffering from drug dependency, there is a growing number of patients affected by alcoholism and mental health issues, expanding the specialisation of the practice.

Mauricio is also an enthusiastic photographer and has a keen interest in skin cancer. He started to record different skin conditions through photography, which in turn led him to undertake the University of Queensland School of Medicine's Primary Care Skin Cancer training, followed by a Skin Cancer Surgery workshop.

He then started the project SkinCheckup which involves scanning a patient's body and providing them with the images to encourage self-surveillance. He also undertakes surgical procedures, biopsies and excisions as part of his skin cancer treatments.

Mauricio is keen to pass on his knowledge to the next generation of doctors and often provides a skin clinic session to medical students from Monash University.

"I never expected to move from orthopaedics to general practice, but the fulfilment I have achieved in seeing people beat addictions makes this the most amazing job."

Dr Christopher Hengel – Ballarat

Chris Hengel grew up on a dairy farm south of Drouin in West Gippsland, and graduated from Monash University in 1997 as the top graduate from the Alfred Hospital clinical school.

He was frequently frustrated by the poor outcomes of patients transferred from country centres to city hospitals, in particular, coronary angioplasty and stenting for heart attacks, and was determined to set up a facility capable of performing these procedures in a major regional centre.

Chris undertook further subspecialist training in echocardiography at the Monash Medical Centre and then headed overseas with his gynaecologist wife, Jeanette, and their young son to British Columbia, Canada, where he trained in coronary angioplasty and stenting.

He set up his practice in Ballarat in 2006 and has since helped expand cardiology services for the whole region. His practice supports two visiting cardiothoracic surgeons, a cardiac arrhythmia specialist and two other cardiologists, all of whom he has successfully recruited from

Melbourne. In 2009 he was instrumental in establishing the first coronary angioplasty and stenting service outside Melbourne and Geelong at St John of God Hospital.

“We have treated over 500 public and private patients achieving excellent results. We are now also opening a cath lab at Ballarat Base Hospital, which will be one of best facilities of its kind in Australia,” he says.

Chris is a senior lecturer at Melbourne, Deakin and Notre Dame Universities.

His wife Jeanette Lim is a urogynaecologist, one of eight in Victoria and the only one based in a regional centre.

“I am very proud of my wife and what she has achieved. Rather than rural patients going to Melbourne for treatment, Jeanette has patients routinely coming from Melbourne to see her in Ballarat,” Chris adds.

Jeanette and Chris now have two young children and enjoy life in Ballarat tremendously.



“Both Jeanette and I have taken great satisfaction in breaking new ground and setting up new services not previously available in regional Victoria. Our aim is not only to provide a standard of care, which is as good as Melbourne, but better!”



Dr Max Higgs – Inglewood



Max Higgs was born in Inglewood and attended a local primary school. He graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1981, then spent a year at the Mildura Base Hospital, followed by two years as an RMO at the Williamstown Hospital.

Max then took on solo rural general practice in Wedderburn where he met and married Annie. After five years, they moved back to Inglewood where Max and Annie have lived, worked together and raised a family for the past 21 years.

Max is also Medical Superintendant and a VMO at Inglewood Hospital.

He supports and mentors the nursing staff at the hospital, and has mentored and assisted other medical staff, including overseas trained doctors, thereby ensuring that both Inglewood and Wedderburn have been spared the rural GP shortages that beset many rural communities.

Max is a member of the Murray Plains Division of General Practice and has a long standing active commitment to the LAOS program, which provides peer review of adverse patient outcomes for small rural hospitals.

His leadership and involvement covers many aspects of the local community, including serving as a Councillor on the Loddon Shire Council from 1997 to 2000. He is the current and foundation Chairman of the Inglewood and Districts Community Bank and umpires football games in the Loddon Valley League.

Like many rural GP spouses, Annie's commitment to family and her contribution to both the community and the medical practice are no less important than those of her husband. Max and Annie believe that they have been lucky to raise their three sons in country Victoria.

Max promotes a healthy lifestyle and leads by example. He is a regular participant in the Bridgewater triathlon and amongst his many outdoor activities is his love of horseracing.

Max says "I am indebted to one of my predecessors, and former family doctor, the late Ralph Sacks for the following piece of wisdom: 'There are two reasons that I have been able to survive so long in rural practice: 1. My desire to continue learning, and 2. The almost infinite capacity of the human body to repair itself'."

"The work can be demanding, but one cannot put a price on the value of being a trusted and respected part of a rural community."

Dr Phil Huguenin – Korumburra

Philip Huguenin graduated from Monash University in 1978 and completed a Diploma of Anaesthetics in 1983 and a Diploma of Obstetrics in 1984.

He commenced work at the Korumburra Medical Centre in 1983 and, over time, has supported and worked as a VMO with the Korumburra District Hospital – now known as the Gippsland Southern Health Korumburra Campus.

Philip also supports and works with three local nursing homes. He has worked in obstetrics, anaesthetics, and has been a 24-hour on-call doctor with the local hospital for the past 27 years.

Philip has mentored medical students within the practice and two doctors have returned to the area. One now works at the Korumburra Medical Centre.

He is an accredited supervisor for the PGPPP program and Southern GP Training, and teaches students from the Gippsland School of Rural Health.

“Australia remains a wonderful country in which to live and work. Medicine’s greatest assets are the people that work on the front line,” Philip says.

He supports local sporting and community groups, is a member of the Korumburra Bena Football Club, is a keen cyclist, and has raised funds for the hospital by competing in the Murray to Moyne bike ride.

Philip is married to Lynn and they have three boys who attended local schools. Both Philip and Lynn are involved in the school community.

As well as cycling, Philip enjoys gardening, travel and genealogy. He is involved with the local football team, likes dining out, going to the theatre, enjoys music and spending time with his family.

As Philip says “A successful person has been able to achieve because of the support of family.”



“As a rural doctor you have an opportunity to see things through, and with that comes increased responsibilities, but also increased rewards and job satisfaction.”



Dr Shaker Issa – Wedderburn



Shaker Issa grew up in a rural setting on the West Bank outside of Jerusalem.

After obtaining a scholarship to study medicine, Shaker graduated in 1983 from Basrah University in Iraq, and then worked for a variety of organisations worldwide including the United Nations, Red Cross, Human Concern International and the World Health Organisation. During that time Shaker travelled through many countries and had the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life.

In 1989 Shaker came to Australia to pursue studies in Occupational Medicine in Sydney, when his life took an unexpected turn – he met Raga, an Australian fashion designer, whom he married and they now have two sons.

Shaker completed his Master of Occupational Health and Safety at the University of Sydney in 1993, and attained his Postgraduate Diploma in Rural and Remote Medicine from James Cook University in 2004.

He is a Fellow of ACRRM, RACGP, and the Australasian College of Tropical Medicine

(ACTM), and an Associate Fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Travel Medicine (AFTM).

He was appointed Preceptor in 2000 and Senior Lecturer on 2004 at the University of Queensland. He is also a GP Supervisor and an examiner for the RACGP.

He has worked in many rural and remote towns across Australia and commenced practising at the High Street Health Clinic, Wedderburn, Victoria in November 2006 and at the Monash University Primary Care Clinic in June 2007.

Shaker put a great deal of effort into enticing the first pharmacist to the local Wedderburn community in over 10 years, and he is actively involved with the Inglewood Hospital, having VMO rights, as well as the nursing home and the hostel.

Shaker enjoys sport and is an avid supporter and sponsor of the Wedderburn Golf Club, Football Club and Bowls Club, and he also sponsors the award for the best fourth year medical student at Monash School of Rural Health, Bendigo.

“The work is interesting and, at times, challenging and demanding. Rural practice provides an infinite variety of cases, which is both inspiring and stimulating, and makes every day a new experience.”

Dr Dennis Joyce – Mildura

Since he graduated from Monash University in 1976, Dennis has spent almost all of his working life in Mildura, initially at Mildura Base Hospital and, subsequently, in general practice.

The Mildura Base Hospital holds special significance for Dennis as it was not only the place where he began his medical working life but also where he met Jill, who began work there at about the same time, as a radiographer.

In the days when General Practitioners were actively involved with in-patient care Dennis was a member of the Medical Staff Group and served on the Executive and as Chairperson. He was a member of the Mildura Base Hospital Board of Management and has been a member of the Community Advisory Board of the present Mildura Base Hospital since its inception in 2000.

Dennis has been involved in teaching undergraduates, initially in the random attachment of students from the universities, but over the last seven years he has been both a tutor at the Monash Clinical School and a

mentor for students attached to his clinic. Dennis is also involved with Beyond Medical Education, the regional training provider for GP Registrars, as both a supervisor and the regional Medical Educator.

Dennis considers himself very fortunate to have been able to follow a career path which has provided him with so much enjoyment and professional satisfaction and is constantly promoting the benefits of rural general practice to the next generation of doctors.

Apart from medicine, Dennis has had an active interest in St Joseph's College in Mildura where his three children completed their secondary education. He served on the school's advisory board for a number of years, including ten years as chairperson.

In 1993 Dennis and Jill took their three children away for a year, travelling through Europe and Canada in a camper van. They managed to survive the year and the family still talk to each other, although the trip is blamed for giving all the children the travel bug!



"My definition of rural general practice: professional satisfaction with quality of life."

Dr Peter Keppel – Yarrawonga



Peter Keppel graduated from the University of Melbourne with an MBBS in 1978, and then spent time in the UK to gain GP anaesthetic and obstetric qualifications before taking up a post as a Registrar in Yarrawonga in 1983. He has practised there since 1985.

Peter has been a supervisor to students at his practice, and a senior medical educator for the Bogong Regional Training Network, including managing the pilot ROVE program, which has continued as an ongoing concern.

Peter is the director of NVRMEN at the University of Melbourne Rural Health Academic Centre in Shepparton, and runs the Extended Rural Cohort Program, which involves establishing and delivering a rural and regional community-based year for senior medical students. The first group of 11 students will graduate in late November of this year.

Peter is a VMO at the Yarrawonga and District Health Services, a past President of the Yarrawonga Community Health Centre Board, past Vice-President of the Board of the Yarrawonga Hospital, and has served on the Board of the North East Victorian Division

of General Practice. He is a life governor of Yarrawonga District Hospital, an award granted in 2007.

Typically, as a country practitioner, Peter has been involved in obstetrics, emergency medicine, anaesthetics, minor surgical procedures and much more, until he increased his involvement in rural medical education in 2009. He still works one day a week at Yarrawonga Denis Medical Group.

Peter says “A midlife change into education came with some rewards and some challenges. You meet some great people, not least of these are my students – our future doctors.”

Peter’s wife, Gillian, is a secondary teacher and a country girl, growing up in Kerang and Bendigo. They have one daughter, Laura.

Peter enjoys gardening and getting out in the fresh air on their five acre block with the horses, chickens and dogs. He actively supports Laura’s equestrian pursuits and Gillian’s poultry management. Boris, the Shi-Tzu dog, enjoys his daily walk and has a similar facial hirsutism as his owner.

“I attribute my long and successful career as a GP to the assistance of some key people early in my medical training and hope that, along the way, I can do the same for others.”

Dr Harry Lee – Shepparton

Outstanding Contribution

Harry Lee was born and educated in Darwin, and then studied medicine at Monash University, graduating in 1974.

He and Elizabeth, a physiotherapist, married in 1978 and travelled to England, where Harry undertook further training, gaining a Diploma of Obstetrics and anaesthetics qualifications.

They returned to Australia in 1981, settling first in Traralgon and then in Shepparton. In the early days, Harry delivered babies and looked after patients at the Goulbourn Valley Base Hospital and Shepparton Private Hospital. Harry also worked as an assistant to the local surgeon and one of the obstetricians.

In the 1990s Harry was heavily involved in the Goulburn Valley Division of General Practice. "The establishment of the divisions brought doctors together, provided opportunities for professional development, and led to more collaborative working relationships between the practices in the area," he says.

Involvement with the divisions also led to Harry's involvement in the Shepparton

Retirement Villages, where he has provided medical support for over 15 years.

In the 1980s and 1990s Harry was part of a five GP practice servicing a large rural community and covering clinic hours, hospital and nursing home visits, home visits and after hours on-call – it was a busy time.

Times change and practices evolve, and Harry has seen many staff come and go over the last 30 years. Of course, the stability of the practice has meant that Harry has been able to work with patients and their families, looking after their health needs and getting to know them.

Harry and Elizabeth have three adult sons, Andrew, Geoffrey and Christopher. As retirement or slowing down looms, it might provide the time to spend with family, cycling, playing bridge, and more travel.

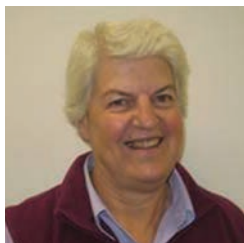
Of course, letting go is the trick, and Harry has yet to work out how to unknit his patients' lives from his own in order to retire!



"Over the years I have learnt that the time you spend with people is more important than the treatment you give them."



Dr Helen Malcolm – Shepparton



Prior to studying medicine, Helen Malcolm had worked as an entomologist, teacher and Deputy Director of an orphanage in Bangladesh. She graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1984.

She commenced work at the Western General Hospital in Footscray, including rotations to the Mildura Base Hospital and Wodonga District Hospital, and then moved to the Wangaratta District Base Hospital. This was followed by a number of years in the UK and Tanzania, East Africa. On her return, Helen was a procedural GP in rural Tasmania before working in Bendigo and Launceston and became Associate Head of the Rural Clinical School, University of Tasmania.

She has worked at the Lister House Medical Centre in Shepparton on and off for the last 10 years. She returned to her home town permanently in 2008, where she is now a GP, Anglican priest and Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne Rural Clinical School.

Her special interest is in mental health, including stress management for patients, students and doctors. Helen is also involved

in activities to bring health information to the community, as well as encouraging rural students to aim for health studies at university.

Tennis, badminton and church activities occupy any remaining spare time!

“Rural people are so appreciative of what doctors do for them. You get to know them in the context of their families and communities and feel that you can make a real difference. It’s the same with the students I teach in the practice and at the university,” explains Helen.

“In the country this is so much more one-to-one. It is wonderful to see how keen the students are, to get to know them and see them mature into fine doctors – not to mention what I learn from them! The other people I work with in Shepparton all contribute to making this a wonderful and satisfying place to teach and practice medicine.”

“Country practice enables me to balance satisfying work with great lifestyle opportunities.”

Dr Leon Malzinskas – Wonthaggi

Leon Malzinskas graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1984 and became an intern at Warrnambool Base Hospital in 1985, where he developed an interest in emergency medicine.

The move was made to Wonthaggi Medical Group in South Gippsland in 1989, where he joined a partnership of six GPs, two GP Surgeons and one specialist General Surgeon in providing both GP and hospital services to the local community.

Leon stayed with the Group until 2008 when he took up an appointment with Bass Coast Regional Health Wonthaggi Hospital as the Senior Medical Officer. The health service had recently moved to an HMO model of care in the Emergency Department and, with many of the new HMOs being International Medical Graduates, there was a real need to provide supervision and education to ensure the community continued to get the best care possible.

He has also established a senior cover roster for weekends and public holidays to provide on-site supervision and support of the HMOs

for the busiest period of the day, seven days a week.

Leon trains and mentors young doctors and has been a Rural and Remote Area Placement Program Supervisor, GP Registrar Supervisor, Designated Aviation Medical Examiner, and SCUBA diver examiner. He was the South Gippsland Displan Area Medical Co-ordinator for several years and is a Senior Instructor and Director of both Advanced Paediatric Life Support and Early Management of Severe Trauma courses. He has also made several trips overseas teaching APLS in both Sri Lanka and Cambodia.

He has a Masters degree in sport medicine and provided medical support for the Deaflympics 2005, Commonwealth Games 2006 and the Simpson Desert Bike Challenge since 2003 – and also competed on four occasions.

He is married to Carmel and they have four children. They are building a house in Inverloch and one day hope to actually finish it and move in.



“Despite some difficulties associated with working in a rural area, these are far outweighed by the rewards of practice and the enjoyment of the lifestyle and community.”





Dr Nola Maxfield – Wonthaggi

Outstanding Contribution

Nola Maxfield is a true country girl. She grew up and went to school in Drouin, where she met her husband, Neil Rankine.

Nola graduated from Monash University in 1980 and then proceeded to look for the right rural area to raise a family with Neil. After a time in Echuca, they settled in Wonthaggi where they remain 26 years later.

Nola's interest in medical politics was kindled by a report that stated that no rural hospital should admit children for more than 24 hours. She joined the Rural Doctors Association of Victoria, enjoying a couple of years as their President. Then she became a foundation member of ACRRM and later served on its Board. With the advent of Divisions of General Practice, Nola joined that Board, became Executive Director and served many years as the Chair. She remains on the Board and expects to be present at its winding up.

At a national level, Nola has long been involved with the Rural Doctors Association of Australia, again serving as President for two terms.

Wonthaggi has seen rapid expansion over the 26 years, with the on-call and emergency workload escalating to the extent that a new model of care needed to be provided. The hospital didn't want to move to a model that would have required funding by them, so vigorous discussions occurred, including in local and state media.

Nola has an interest in ensuring the education of the next generation of rural doctors. Wonthaggi was the first PGY2 rural practice attachment in Victoria, which has now evolved to an intern program where half the time is in the practice, the remainder at the hospital. She served on the Board of getGP as vice-president.

With two children now grown up, Nola and Neil continue their activities within the Wonthaggi and wider Gippsland area.

"We enjoy bushwalking, both around our local area and going away for longer walks. Gardening is important, and it is great to be able to cook with produce just picked from the garden. I also try to practice what I preach and do regular exercise classes and gym work," says Nola.



"The pleasures of rural practice are the variety of work, the adrenaline surges, being part of a community and to treat multiple generations of the same family."



Dr Roslyn McCallum – Sea Lake



Roslyn McCallum grew up on a farm in Birchip and was educated at local schools before attending boarding school in Melbourne. She graduated from Monash University in 1976 and holds a Diploma of Obstetrics from The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG). She is a member of the RACGP, ACRRM and RDAV.

Roslyn worked in a number of rural locations, including the Bendigo Base Hospital, the Kangaroo Flat Community Health Centre, the Mildura Base Hospital and the Eaglehawk Community Health Centre, before taking up full-time general practice in Echuca in 1986.

In 1992 Roslyn commenced general practice at the Sea Lake Medical Practice. Following the birth of her second child in 1996, she moved to the Birchip Medical Practice. From 1992 to 2000 Roslyn also worked at the Women's Health Clinic at the Warracknabeal Hospital.

Since 2004, Roslyn has worked in general practice, with an interest in women's health, at the Sea Lake Medical Practice, and several years ago commenced a half day per week practice at the remote town of Woomelang,

providing services to an ageing population through the Bush Nursing Centre.

In late 2009 the Sea Lake community found itself fighting to save the hospital from closure. Roslyn joined the action group and was soon involved in the meetings and petitions to parliament. The hospital received an eleventh hour reprieve, showing what positive civic action can achieve.

Roslyn is married to Warrick, a farmer, and together they run a sheep and grain property. They have two teenage daughters who attended the local school as primary students and now board in Melbourne. The family was involved with many school activities and hosted five Japanese students and four overseas agricultural students. They remain in contact with all of them to this day.

Roslyn was actively involved with the Women on Farms Gathering held in Berriwillock in 2008, which was attended by over 300 women from all over Victoria. She is an avid photographer and recorded the event in photos. Roslyn is a master patchworker and is a competitive hockey player at masters level, playing for a club in Bendigo.

“Community spirit, volunteering and involvement at all levels keeps small towns in the country alive, and I am lucky to be part of the Birchip family.”

Dr Iain McConachie – Yarram

Outstanding Contribution

In the 1970s, the GP situation in Yarram was becoming critical. The town was down to two doctors, both of whom were in poor health.

This was one of the factors that resulted in Iain firstly completing HSC at the local high school in 1973 – attending school between milkings – and then being accepted into Medicine at Monash University in 1975.

Iain's first year internship was at Wangaratta where he combined medicine with cricket, music theatre, the local brass band and developing a passion for croquet.

A second year internship was completed at Shepparton. Here, Iain met and married Yvonne, who has somehow managed to cope with the difficulties of being wife to a rural GP.

Returning to Yarram, Iain provided a locum service to doctors in Yarram and Rosedale, managed the medical service at the local prison, was immunisation officer for the local shire, conducted health checks at the local sale yards and provided health education sessions at the Yarram Secondary College.

In 1994 Iain took over a solo practice, which he maintains to the present day, sharing the on-call roster at the local hospital. The practice provides the usual general practice services as well as a methadone program and student mentoring.

Iain continues to maintain the family farm, milking a house cow and managing sheep and cattle. The staff remember well an orphan lamb spending a day in a box by the wood heater in the surgery.

Like other rural practices appreciation by patients is often shown in kind – fish, fruit, vegetables and cooking.

Over many years, Iain has played the bugle calls at ANZAC remembrance days and funerals. He played the last post at the fiftieth ANZAC Day service and hopes to be able to play the bugle calls at the hundredth in 2015.

Returning to the district where he grew up and where he was best known as a footballer and cricketer has been a real advantage. As Iain explains “local knowledge is often a very useful thing.”



“Having spent the first 15 years of my working life dairy farming, I entered medicine with a deep concern for udders.”



Dr Christopher Medley – Wodonga

Christopher Medley gained a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at the University of Sydney in 1971, and afterwards spent time in the UK where he became a member of the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1975.

He returned to Australia in 1977, working at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. During this period he became a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Physicians in 1979.



Chris returned to Wodonga to set up practice in the late 1970s and at the time was the only physician servicing the Wodonga/Albury area. He worked at the Wodonga Hospital on an as-needs basis, where a significant proportion of his work came from coronary care.

In 1989 he gained his Diploma of Diagnostic Ultrasound and established the first echocardiograph service in Wodonga.

Chris assisted in setting up the RMO and Registrar programs, peer review and audit committees, and is still a participant to this day.

Living in the country has provided a life away from medicine, and Chris enjoys bushwalking, bike riding and cross country skiing. He loves to travel overseas and has trekked in Nepal, climbed Mt Kilimanjaro in Kenya, and climbed the Simian Mountains in Ethiopia with family and friends.

Chris Medley is well known and respected in the community he so enjoys.

“Born in Narrandera, New South Wales, and growing up in Albury, the country was always going to be my home, and Wodonga has provided a fulfilling life.”

Dr Brian Murphy – Mildura

Brian Murphy graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1978 and spent his first year as a doctor at St Vincent's Hospital. He became a Junior Resident Officer at the Mildura Base Hospital from 1980 to 1981, and a trainee in general practice in 1981-1982. He immediately liked country life and knew that was where he wanted to be.

Brian has been a principal GP at the Deakin Medical Centre in Mildura since 1983, and has been a VMO with the Mildura Base Hospital since 1981 and the Mildura Private Hospital since 1986. In 1991, Brian was made a Life Governor of the Mildura Base Hospital.

He is the inaugural Chair and long time Board member of the Mallee Division of General Practice. He has been involved in the training and mentoring of GP Registrars within the practice as a regional training network medical educator.

"A particular advantage of working in Mildura has been the cooperative interaction between local GPs and specialists," Brian says.

Many of Brian's colleagues have worked in Mildura as long as, or longer than, Brian. "There is a sense of camaraderie, both in treating patients, and in teaching students and GP trainees, which makes for a very pleasant working environment," he adds.

Through his involvement with, and support of, local sporting clubs, he has held offices such as Club Doctor with the South Mildura Football Club and Squash Club President. Other roles have included Medical Officer of Health – Mildura Rural City Council and Surgeon at the St John's Ambulance Brigade.

He was very proud to be an Olympic torchbearer in Mildura and also worked as a volunteer at the Sydney Olympics and Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Brian is married to Jennifer and they have four sons, a daughter and three grandchildren. He is a keen runner and recently completed his eleventh Melbourne Marathon. He also enjoys travelling, reading, swimming, bike riding and squash.



"I am the happiest GP in Victoria. Working as a rural GP allows me to balance my life between general practice, teaching, sport and family. My career has also provided opportunities to work in Canada, Ireland and England, and more recently as a volunteer in India."



Dr Gerald Murphy – Mildura



Gerald Murphy had an international upbringing. He was born in Fiji, and from the age of nine travelled halfway around the world to attend boarding school in England.

Gerald went on to the Sandhurst Military Academy and then to Germany to join a tank regiment in the British Army of the Rhine (BOAR). Gerald was a keen athlete, competing in an annual NATO military pentathlon, “even though I was only a medic,” he says, “I managed to win the top rifle shot of the competition in Holland!”

Gerald studied medicine at London University, qualifying in 1979. He rejoined the army in 1983 and served as a doctor in the 2nd Parachute Battalion in Northern Ireland and the Brigade of Gurkhas in Hong Kong and Brunei. In Brunei he ran a Gurkha Family Hospital as the only doctor, helped by three wonderful midwives. “We had 153 deliveries in my time there with just two caesarians – one a placenta praevia and the other the colonel’s wife”.

He returned to his mother’s, and what he describes as God’s own country – Australia – in 1990, and commenced work with the Deakin

Medical Clinic in Mildura, where he has been a GP and VMO with the Mildura Base and Private Hospitals ever since.

Since 1994, Gerald has been the Forensic Medical Officer, Custodial Medical Office and Displan Medical Officer in the community. He says, “As if my day job as a GP isn’t busy enough, I have a ‘night job’ working for the police”. He undertook Q Fever vaccinations in shearing sheds and community halls in Victoria and New South Wales.

He also ran the Sunraysia Asthma Camps for many years. Gerald has also contributed recipes to fundraising publications for the McGrath Foundation.

In his spare time he is a keen gardener, snow skier and cook, “but my passion and hobby is medicine”.

Gerald is married to Tracy and they have two children. Gerald says “We love the Murray River and the region around Mildura so much that we planned to name our children Murray and Darling. However, Darling turned out to be another boy, so we have Murray and Ross.”

“Throughout life I have endeavoured to follow my headmaster’s advice, ‘Imagine life is a hill walk where you don’t want to lose altitude. When you come to a fork in the walk of life, always choose the harder, uphill path’.”

Dr Alexandra Murray – Yarra Glen

Dr Alexandra Murray arrived in Australia in 2002 after working as an inner London GP for two years. Within three months of arrival, with her husband Trevor Oates, they had settled in Healesville.

Life was settled until Black Saturday, which changed the area forever. It became apparent that the local communities needed far greater support and services than could be provided from a two doctor practice with limited facilities.

The search began and, in December 2010, Alex moved into purpose-built premises in Yarra Glen (developed by Trevor) – the Valley Primary Health Centre.

The practice has five doctors. Alex is the principal, leading two practice nurses and a range of allied health professionals. In addition, the practice supports two general practice trainers, of which, Alex is one. The first GP Registrar commenced training in August and they have plans to train practice nurses from 2012.

“We now provide team-based care, where case management and team meetings help us not

only to provide greater and better services but enable us to reach members of the bushfire affected community that haven’t, until now, presented for general health care or support”, says Alex.

“We also provide an outreach clinic at Worowa, the local Aboriginal college which receives girls from all over the country. We have recently been awarded a Rural Infrastructure Grant to further expand the practice and the services. We are pilot participants in the RACGP CHiP and Oxygen projects, and, with the support of the local Anglican Church and its Melbourne partners, we have been able to extend support for bushfire victims. The work continues.”

Alex loves working in the local community and says “We have been privileged to be involved in the recovery following the fires, whilst receiving immense support from the community itself. My five year old daughter, Rebecca, and my husband, Trevor, would never live anywhere else, and with the imminent arrival of another daughter, our family will be complete.”



“The resilience of the community never fails to inspire me, and no more so than when it is presented with a disaster on the scale of Black Saturday. So many of those who had lost everything were still wanting to help others.”



Dr Robert Peterson – Seymour



Robert Peterson attended the University of Melbourne and graduated in 1975. He took up a position in Seymour 30 years ago as a GP providing obstetrics, emergency care and surgery, and he still works full-time at the practice.

Rob grew up in a large, sports loving family. He was a talented sportsman who represented Victoria in junior cricket and football. He was recruited by the North Melbourne Football Club at the age of 16 and still holds the record as the youngest footballer to play for the club.

Rob served his local community as the racecourse doctor and as a committee member of the Seymour Racing Club for 25 years. During his five years as president, he facilitated major building and course redevelopment.

For 20 years he was also a committee member of the Seymour Cricket Club, including seven years as president, during which time he led the club in the construction of clubrooms. He is very proud to have played in an A grade premiership side with the club. Rob has received life membership of both the cricket and racing clubs.

From 1981 to 2007 Rob was an integral part of the Seymour Football Club, serving as club doctor, chairman of selectors, and committee member. In that time Seymour won six Goulburn Valley premierships.

Rob has three sons who, like their father, became enthusiastic participants in the community of Seymour. They are all engineers, now working in Western Australia. Rosey, Rob's wife, has a PhD in epilepsy and public health and has been his Practice Manager. They have bought an old house and Rob has finally discovered a new non-sport activity – DIY home renovation.

Rob has been a long serving member of the VMO committee, serving as Chair several times.

He says "Being a country doctor has been a very rewarding life. It has been professionally satisfying and the warm support of the community has made Seymour a great place to call home."

"Community involvement has improved wellbeing for both my patients and myself."

Dr Ian Pettigrew – Mildura

Ian Pettigrew graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1968 and then spent two years as an RMO at St Vincent's Hospital.

He soon discovered that obstetrics was an area of real need in the country, and returned to the city to gain further experience – he spent three years at the Royal Women's Hospital, a year with the RAAF as an obstetrician in Malaysia and three years in the UK where he gained a specialist qualification from the Australian Regional Council of the RCOG.

In 1978 the Royal Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RACOG) was founded and Ian became a Foundation Fellow.

He worked in Hamilton from 1977 to 1984, and then moved to Warrnambool where he worked until 2002.

Ian has spent the last 32 years working with rural communities to improve the obstetrics and gynaecology services across the State. He is a busy VMO at the Mildura Private Hospital,

works with the Mildura Base Hospital, and is Associate Professor in Rural Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Mildura Regional Clinical School of Monash University.

He actively campaigns for the medical needs of country towns and encourages young doctors to consider a move to rural communities.

He has held many leadership positions with RACOG, RANZCOG and JCCO. In 2008, Ian was awarded the Presidents Medal – the highest individual award – by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Ian moved to Mildura in 2003 with his wife Mandy and two daughters, and he has one son in Warrnambool and another in London.



"I came to the country as I felt this was where I could practice to the best of my ability, and I've been rewarded by working with a group of great family GPs and being able to look after my own community."



Dr Claire Pickett – Ballarat



Claire Pickett graduated from Monash University in 1987 together with her spouse Vince. They met on orientation day in first year and pretty much journeyed the trials and tribulations of medical school together.

After completing her residency in Ballarat where she gained a Diploma in Obstetrics, she and Vince moved to Creswick, opened a practice and worked there for the next 10 years. Claire also worked at Ballarat University as the students' doctor.

After time spent overseas they returned to Ballarat and Claire began work at the Ballarat Community Health Centre. "The work at the Centre is a combination of sexual and adolescent health. Over the last eight years I have seen many young men and women through the turmoil of their adolescence. I am always impressed, but not surprised by how responsible and wonderful young people really are. It saddens me that teens are portrayed with such an unflattering stereotype in the media."

Claire has worked with many medical students over the past eight years, most recently final year students from Notre Dame University. She has introduced the students to patients with little or no resources, patients whose parents are drug dependent, patients who have turned to sex work for their livelihood, patients who are trying to rehabilitate from a drug habit, patients who are transgender, patients who have suffered sexual assault and those who simply need to be understood.

Claire says "All of these people have inspired me, and hopefully my students, to always keep an open mind and an open heart. Medicine is, above all, the science of eliminating suffering."

Claire talks to community groups, generally teens about looking after themselves, staying safe, and sexual health. She is an Implanon trainer and travels throughout western Victoria conducting training sessions for rural GPs. "I love this work because I feel an affiliation with the participants from my time working as a GP in Creswick".

"As a doctor, my inspiration comes from my patients, their vibrancy, their insights and their diversity. Humanity is a wonderful organism and I am fortunate to be allowed into the inner sanctum of these personal experiences."

Dr David Pierce – Ballarat

David Pierce is originally from Northern Ireland. He came to Australia as a teenager and graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1977, and has been a GP with the Ballarat Group Practice since 1981.

Out of his practice experience, he developed a special concern for the treatment of depression and anxiety in general practice, and in promoting evidence-based care for common mental health problems that are seen by GPs daily.

In addition to his clinical load, David has enjoyed a rich academic life at the University of Melbourne, initially in the Department of General Practice and then with the Rural Health Academic Centre where he currently is an Associate Professor and Director of the University Department of Rural Health.

Along the way he became the first GP in Australia to be awarded a National Institute of Clinical Studies (NH&MRC) three year Fellowship. His MD thesis showed that GPs can readily develop the skill to provide problem solving as an effective treatment for depression in routine practice.

David enjoys his life and practice in a rural community, and feels it is vital that good research and teaching occurs beyond the capital cities.

Applying solutions developed in large capital cities does not always provide the best approaches for patients. He also feels it is important that we have centres of academic excellence in rural Victoria to attract the best minds away from the capital cities to support rural healthcare.

“Many GPs have special interest and skill areas,” he says. “These, collectively, add to the richness of the service we provide to our communities.”

David’s enthusiasm for special interest areas is reflected in his work as a researcher and clinician focusing on general practice mental health, especially the non-pharmacological treatments for depression and anxiety.

He feels these special interests have an important place in the wide range of care clinicians provide, especially in rural areas.



“More than 30 years ago I came to work in rural Victoria for one year – I’m still here. It’s been a great experience, especially being able to make a contribution to rural mental health.”



Dr Andrew Slutzkin – Seymour

Andrew Slutzkin grew up in Melbourne and graduated from Monash University in 1972.

He and Heather (who was raised in Peachester, Queensland) married in 1979, and have three adult children – David, Rebecca and Paula. Grandson Samuel is 20 months old, and his mum, Rebecca, expects another soon.

Andrew chose a rural career. From 1979 to 1983 he worked in general practice in Euroa. The family then lived for three years in England where Andrew undertook full-time training in obstetrics and gynaecology.



In late 1986, the family returned to Australia and Andrew started his GP/obstetrics career in Seymour. Heather and Andrew stayed for 25 years, moving to Melbourne recently, where all their children have settled.

Andrew was a Visiting Medical Officer at Seymour Hospital with advanced privileges: obstetrics, including emergency and elective caesarean section, epidurals, surgical procedures including laparoscopic surgery, vasectomy, laparotomy (e.g. ectopic pregnancy), hysteroscopy, complex removal of skin lesions and obstetric ultrasounds.

In 2000-01, Andrew, in partnership with Dr Bill Dwyer, rebuilt the Seymour Family Clinic. It is now an eight doctor training practice, with three nurses and many visiting specialists.

Seymour lost its birthing service in 2004. Andrew worked tirelessly with new hospital CEO, Doreen Power, and the executive team to restart the service early in 2008. Now, nearly 200 babies are born annually at Seymour Hospital, with all-hours availability of caesarean section and management of other complications. Obstetric/GPs work in a collaborative model with midwives. Dr Rob North, who came for a GP Registrar term, stayed in Seymour and has successfully trained in advanced obstetrics.

Andrew was a Seymour School Councillor for many years. He and friends started a bridge club locally. He continues to share a passion for gardens and the countryside with Heather. He led RDAV in 2002-03 and has also been Vice-President of RDAA.

Andrew continues to practice in women's health, both in Melbourne and as a locum obstetrician/GP in rural Australia.

"Babies have been my passion. It has been an honour to share births with more than 1000 mothers during my career."

Dr Daryl Smith – Bairnsdale

Daryl Smith graduated from Monash University in 1983, completed his intern year at Prince Henry's Hospital, and post graduate training through the FMP at Frankston Hospital.

In 1989 he worked at Heathcote, before moving to Bairnsdale in 1990, where he remains to this day.

"I was always going to move back to Gippsland, an area where I grew up, and Bairnsdale is my wife, Robyn's, home town. Bairnsdale also provided a good environment to raise and educate our three children – Zachary, Madeleine and Annabel."

"Professionally, Bairnsdale has enabled me to work in the full range of family medicine, including obstetrics, anaesthetics, paediatrics, accident and emergency, and palliative care."

Bairnsdale has two large well-equipped GP clinics, supporting each other and the local hospital. Daryl also visits his patients in local nursing homes and the Clifton Waters Retirement Village, as well as some home visits.

He also trains and supports Monash medical students during their time at the clinic, and provides leadership to interns at the Bairnsdale Hospital.

Daryl has supported the Doctors for Farm Health project for several years, and is the doctor for the Bairnsdale Football Club, Bairnsdale Netball Club and the Bairnsdale Amateur Boxing Club.

He is a keen supporter of the Essendon Football Club and enjoys his garden.

"I know most junior doctors are concerned about the potential professional isolation when working in the country, however, it has been my experience that our medical colleagues, both local and in the referral centres, are supportive and happy to discuss management problems as they arise."

"Country general practice is hard work with long hours, but it is rewarding work in an appreciative community."



"Being born in the country, raised in the country and educated in the country, meant I was always going to work in the country."



Dr Alan Soward – Mildura



Alan Soward studied at Monash University and was awarded his MBBS in 1976, marrying Bev in the same year.

He worked in Melbourne until 1984, undertaking physician training at the Queen Victoria Medical Centre and cardiology at the Alfred Hospital. He then spent two years as a Cardiology Fellow at the Thoraxcentre, Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Bev was also employed and established the office framework for a research group known as Cardialysis.

Alan and Bev returned to Australia in 1986 and Alan undertook some General Medical locums in Mildura. They enjoyed the friendliness of the community and, as the need for a cardiology service was apparent, they decided to stay – a decision they have never regretted.

They established the Mildura Cardiology practice and, whilst Alan remains the only local Cardiologist, the practice has seven visiting Cardiologists.

Alan is a Visiting Medical Officer/Cardiologist at both the Mildura Private and Mildura

Base Hospitals. He has served on numerous committees including terms as Chairman of the MPH Medical Advisory Committee and of the MBH Medical Staff Group.

He greatly enjoys teaching and is the Director of Physician Training at MBH and is a Senior Lecturer at the Mildura branch of Monash University. He is currently involved in teaching five General Medical and one Cardiology Registrars on rotation from Melbourne, and is a Senior Lecturer at the Mildura branch of Monash University.

His community commitment is evidenced by his donation of automated external defibrillators to local clubs and schools, including all the football clubs in the two local leagues. Alan is also a patron of the HeartBeat Sunraysia group.

Alan and Bev share a passion for travel, their pet dogs, and the Melbourne Football Club. Alan is a life member of the, now defunct, VFA Oakleigh Football Club.

“I so enjoy being warmly greeted in the local supermarket by people whose lives I have touched in some way, and it is an honour to be able to employ local people and contribute to their lives.”

Dr Ken Tate – Healesville

Outstanding Contribution

Ken Tate grew up in Melbourne and initially trained as a radiographer, working at the Ballarat Base Hospital. He had always wanted to be a rural GP and, after his time in Ballarat in the early 1960s, Ken decided that this was going to be his vocation. He graduated from Monash University with an MBBS in 1977.

His residency was completed at the Alfred Hospital and he then took up a position at the Lang Park Medical Centre in Langwarrin. The practice grew quickly and soon employed some 10 doctors, which seemed to Ken to lose the family/community philosophy that he so loved.

During this time, Ken was on the Board of the Peninsular Private Hospital, practising obstetrics and minor surgical procedures at the Frankston Hospital, and commenced his first cancer support group.

After 15 years Ken searched for somewhere where he could practice rural community medicine and get to know his patients and their families.

Ken commenced with a practice in Healesville in 1999 and, in 2009, moved to the Yarra Valley Community Medical Service, where he has been able to maintain his great relationships with his patients who come from far and wide to see him. Ken also has admitting rights at the local Healesville and District Hospital.

Ken indulges his passion for steam locomotives and even has his own train. He is also a very good artist. He is interested in flora and fauna, and his property reflects his love of the environment.

He has opened up his property for a men's health group, which runs on a weekly basis, and has provided companionship and fostered close friendships. Ken has participants building miniature steam engines and associated equipment and his wife, Judy, happily provides lunches for the men who attend every week.

A further cancer/palliative care support group was started and runs every Thursday evening that people attend from many kilometres away.



“Working away from the big smoke is very appealing. The people are great and getting to know the patient and their families allows me to be of greater help. I like to think of my patients as friends.”



Dr Nick Thies – Warrnambool

As a fifth year medical student, Nick Thies discovered Warrnambool while doing a five week elective at the Warrnambool Base Hospital. After enjoying the relaxed lifestyle and being able to use his practical skills, he returned for a year as an RMO. At the same time he was able to earn his restricted flying licence, do basic aerobatics and extend his medical knowledge.



Nick says “I knew I wanted to do paediatrics from medical school and when Linda and I travelled to the UK for two years, I was fortunate enough to get a neonatal SHO post in my second year out of medical school.”

Nick returned to the Queen Victoria Hospital and the Royal Children’s Hospital to complete his paediatric training and then, as part of a wave of newly qualified paediatricians moving to regional centres, he set up a paediatric practice in Warrnambool in 1980.

Nick says “I think the time saved by working from home and having the hospital around the corner allowed me to be involved in many of my daughters’ activities, read exciting stories

to them each evening, and still build radio controlled aeroplanes, jog, play squash and build furniture.”

These days Nick considers himself fortunate to be part of an enthusiastic and dedicated team of four paediatricians. Their teaching commitments extend from RMOs, to advanced trainee Registrars, and more recently Deakin Medical School students.

He travels regularly to Portland and Camperdown outreach clinics, which makes for a pleasant change of scenery.

“I now find time to play the violin with the Warrnambool Symphony Orchestra, keep fit swimming with the Warrnambool Whales Master Swimmers, and practise magic tricks to perform at functions and children’s parties,” he says.

“I still enjoy working and reading journals to keep up with the latest developments, and gain great satisfaction when asked to care for babies and children of patients past.”

“It has been a fascinating journey being part of the changing landscape of paediatric medicine over the past 30 years and I still get a tremendous kick out of it.”

Dr Will Twycross – Mansfield

Outstanding Contribution

Will Twycross spent his first 10 years after graduation working overseas – mainly in Kenya, but also in India, Antarctica and England. These experiences were all very different to each other, but resulted in a broad based experience in public health, anaesthetics and operative obstetrics.

Will achieved first place in the UK Diploma of Obstetrics, which inspired him to take up a position running a busy obstetrics ward in rural Kenya.

Twenty five years ago, he and his wife Margie moved back to Margie's home town, Mansfield, in Victoria's north-east. Margie's family totals eight generations in the Mansfield district, so Will found he was related to almost everyone! The couple has three sons, all of whom are currently in Kenya, visiting the hospital where they spent some of their childhood.

With his professional partner, Kerrie Davis, Will established the Central General Practice in one of Mansfield's federation era houses. The practice now has a staff of 16, and trains medical

students and Registrars. The practice has three outlying clinics, and Will has also worked at Mt Buller each winter for the last 15 years.

Will says "The defining community moment for me came when our shire was set for amalgamation. Margie's father had been a past Shire President, and I knew that local government works best within defined communities of interest – where people felt their home was – and was worth fighting for. I stood for council, and we have been the only community in Victoria to get its local government back."

"I'm very proud of that, and also proud of keeping our small hospital's obstetric services going. I believe the Mansfield Hospital is a great model of the services that can be delivered to small communities by dedicated staff."

Over the last few years, Will has chaired the committee building the North-East's biggest local government infrastructure undertaking, a \$14 million project to construct Victoria's longest rail trail, from Mansfield to Tallarook.



"The fabric that makes up small rural communities is a complex and fragile thing. Country doctors take the pulse of the community as well as of their patients, and are in a privileged position to protect what is most valuable."



Dr David Tynan – Maryborough

David Tynan was born in Adelaide and spent many family holidays on a Yorke Peninsula farm, where his Auntie was matron at the local hospital. That experience shaped his desire to be a country GP.

After graduating from Monash University, David spent three years at Geelong Hospital and a year in England before joining the Maryborough Group Practice just over 30 years ago.



He later opened the Nightingale Clinic, which has grown from a solo practice to a five doctor teaching practice in a purpose-built clinic inside the historic Court of Mines building. The practice has a cooperative relationship with its neighbour, the Clarendon Medical Clinic.

Education has always been a special interest, and David is a regular presenter at tutorials in Castlemaine. He has instructed medical students since the early 1980s, and the practice supervises GP Registrars, and has a Monash Rural Stream student two days per week.

David was a foundation member of the Grampians GP Anaesthetists' Small Learning Group many years ago and, more recently, started a similar group for GP Obstetricians.

David has always been very involved in the local community. He was on the Health Service Board for 23 years, and saw the amalgamation of Maryborough, Dunolly and Avoca Hospitals, Community Health and Palliative Care. He was also on the Board of Wattle House (Disability Services), is currently on the Board of the West Victorian Division of General Practice, and is involved with Lions and Rotary Clubs.

David has had the unwavering support of his family and his wife, Glenys, is also involved in the community, currently as the local Chairperson of Red Cross and Secretary of the Hospital Auxiliary.

David still enjoys the procedural side of general practice, and recently had the privilege of being the anaesthetist for the "Black & Decker Drill" burr holes case, which captured the interest of the international press.

"My passions, aside from medicine, are my five dogs and travelling," says David, "and the personal connection you have through general practice makes it all worthwhile."

"I came here with a five year plan, but rural practice in Maryborough has ticked all the boxes for me, and so I have stayed."

Dr John Urie – Bairnsdale

Outstanding Contribution

John Urie graduated from Melbourne University in 1976, and worked through his residency over a four year period, initially at the Austin, a year at the Royal Children's Hospital, obstetrics at the Mercy, and a country GP rotation in Nagambie.

An early rotation to Bairnsdale from the Austin gave John a taste of rural life, and the opportunity to meet and be mentored by some impressive rural GPs who seemed to be able to do anything.

Working at the Bairnsdale Hospital, John was introduced to his future wife, Mendy, a beautiful young nurse in the surgical ward. He continues to look after his patients at the hospital and the local nursing homes.

John worked with Australian Volunteers Abroad in Northern India where he ran a small hospital for Tibetan refugees. He has returned many times over the interceding years and has an ongoing interest in all things Tibetan.

He joined the Bairnsdale Medical Group in 1983, commencing the life of a busy rural doctor with time split between the local hospital and the clinic, doing a bit of everything.

He says "I've been here for so long now that I've lost track of the number of second generation babies I've delivered."

"Life away from medicine involves working in our five acre garden just out of town, sailing on the beautiful Gippsland lakes, skiing up the road at Hotham, and trying to keep track of our three far flung children."



"Rural general practice has been a unique challenge, and only possible with the friendship and support of colleagues and the love of my wife, Mendy."



Dr Bronwyn Williams – San Remo

Bronwyn Williams graduated from Monash University in 1988 and progressed through internship and hospital rotations at Prince Henry's in Melbourne and at the Frankston Hospital.

"I remember the feeling that I'd found the right niche for me when I began GP rotations", she says.

She moved to the Bass Coast Shire 10 years ago and wouldn't live or work anywhere else. The country lifestyle has been great for her two boys, and she has enjoyed the support of wonderful colleagues.



"GPs have the pleasure of seeing generations within families and, in the country, there is the added sense of community, and being able to see the person as a whole and appreciate their place within that community," says Bronwyn.

About two years ago, Bronwyn took up a position with the Bass Coast Community Health Service as the GP attached to the palliative care service with the goal of providing support to patients wishing to remain at home in the later stages of life.

"Home visits are a wonderful way to see people – they are in their domain, with family and pets and precious mementos around them. It is a privilege to be accepted into their homes and lives at such a difficult time. And mostly, I feel we make a real difference to their quality of life," she adds.

Bronwyn enjoys being part of the team at BCCHS which includes nursing staff, allied health workers, social support services and volunteers, all of whom work together to make the palliative journey as easy as possible.

Bronwyn also enjoys walking and ballroom dancing, which keeps her fit and provides her with a complete change from her working environment.

"The most enjoyable facets of general practice are the variety of people and their different circumstances, and this also makes it most challenging."

Dr Robert Ziffer – Sale

Outstanding Contribution

Rob grew up in Melbourne, the son of Holocaust survivors who conceived him in a Shanghai refugee camp.

He graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1970 and worked predominately at St Vincent's Hospital. His intern year included a work stint in Hamilton – started just days after marriage to Margaret – which recently clocked 40 years. This term left him with a strong impression of the breadth and value of rural specialists and led to him taking up a position in Sale in 1978.

"We went initially with a view to trying it for two to three years," says Rob. "The rest is history! We enjoy the sense of community and the contribution one can make, as well as the range of activities available."

After completing physician training, Rob did further training in cardiology in London and at St Vincent's Hospital.

As a Consultant Physician in Sale, he has helped develop intensive and coronary care services, a graduate CCU nursing diploma, established an oncology unit, and provided

outreach services to the people of Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Foster.

Originally a solo physician, Rob has seen the medical unit increase to four physicians, two Registrars and two interns.

Rob served on the Hospital Board of Management for 13 years, including four years as Chairman. He has also chaired the Medical Staff Group, Gippsland AMA, School Council and Gippsland Art Gallery Committee.

He is the rural representative on the Victorian State Committee of the RACP. He was instrumental in enabling educational programs for physician trainees and CPD for adult physicians to be delivered nationally by videoconferencing. He also helped to develop QA programs for the collective use of Victorian rural physicians. In 2005 he was awarded the RACP Medal for Clinical Service in Rural and Remote Areas.

Rob enjoys skiing, bushwalking, bridge, tennis and spending time with his three children and three grandchildren, all of whom live in Melbourne.



"It has been a privilege to spend so much of my working life in the one area, serving one community and establishing so many deep relationships with patients and colleagues."



