

WE WANT A DOCTOR

BUT DOES A DOCTOR WANT US?

A GUIDE TO HELP RURAL
COMMUNITIES ATTRACT
AND RETAIN DOCTORS



NSW RURAL DOCTORS NETWORK

This brochure has been developed to help people in rural areas think about ways of improving and retaining local medical services.

HOW TO USE THIS BROCHURE

The information is presented in four tables, each covering a different phase of the planning and implementation process. Start by determining what it is you want (Step 1). Step 2 raises a number of issues you need to think about during the planning stage. Take your time to think each of these through carefully. Making it happen is the next key stage. The suggestions in Step 3 should help with this. It's also important to think about things you can do to maintain local medical services in the future. Step 4 offers some ideas on this. But don't think you are alone. There is a lot of support and assistance available and the contact details of the key organisations are provided on the back page.

STEP 1 WHAT DO WE WANT?

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| Goals and objectives | What clinical services are currently available? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is this likely to change? - In what time frame? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss the situation with your local Primary Health Network. They are likely to know about any potential changes in your area. |
| | What clinical services do we need in our community (what is essential)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are our current demographics? - Is this likely to change? - What are our current service patterns - What acute or episodic care do we need? - What chronic care do we need? - What preventive care do we need? - How easily can residents access medical services in other towns? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ? general practice services - ? emergency medical services - ? anaesthetics - ? surgery - ? obstetrics - ? aged care facilities - ? counselling - ? physiotherapy - ? podiatry |
| | What other clinical services would we like in our community (desirable services)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is realistic? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ? occupational therapy - ? dietetics - ? other allied health services |
| | What other services/facilities should we plan for? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-practice teaching/training - Visiting specialists - Allied health services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss teaching and training opportunities with local clinicians, universities/medical schools and rural clinical schools. |
| | What can we afford? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What funds are available to establish (or expand) our medical services? - Are there other possible funding sources? - Will this be a commercial or not-for-profit organisation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there any local businesses that could provide financial or in-kind support? - Are there any government programs/grants we could apply for? |
| Environment | What external factors do we need to consider? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government requirements – Federal, State and local - International and national GP shortage - Changing work practices of GPs - Feminisation of the medical workforce - Stronger team approach to the delivery of health services - Increasing teaching focus in community medicine - Increasing demand from GPs for work/life balance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater competition for medical staff - Increasing reliance on overseas trained doctors - Fewer procedural GPs - GPs less willing to work after hours - GPs less willing to own and manage medical practices |
| Drivers | Who will drive this? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do we have someone in our community with the skills and commitment to drive this venture? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are they willing and able to take on this role? |

STEP 2 HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT...?

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| What are our options? | How can we establish or maintain a local medical service? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could we help recruit a doctor to join an existing practice? - Could we support an existing practice in other ways? - Could we establish a new medical practice? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can we use nursing services more effectively? - Can we use allied health services more effectively? - Can we increase the teaching focus to attract junior doctors? - Can we adopt a stronger team approach to the delivery of health care? |
| | What are the alternatives to a community-based medical service? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do we really need a local, full time medical service? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could fly in/fly out services be provided from a larger centre? - Could we share medical services with other communities? - Could a practice in a nearby centre establish a satellite practice in our community? |
| | What are the ramifications for our community if we don't have a local medical service? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ? Increased morbidity and mortality - ? Fewer employment opportunities - ? Loss of income for local businesses - ? Decline in population - ? Difficulty attracting new residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do these offset the time and money required to establish or maintain a local medical service? |
| Community input | Who are the key players in our community? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are they on-side and committed? - Do they have the time to progress this proposal? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is not on-side/not committed? - Can we get them on-side? - Will those not on-side impede this proposal? |
| | What do our local/current clinicians want? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will our proposal impact on existing services? - Do we have the support of local clinicians, including nurses and allied health care providers? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will the existing clinicians consider integrating their services or joining a new practice at some point? - Will the existing clinicians be willing to support, supervise or mentor new recruits? |
| | Do we have the support of the Area Health Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there any vacancies for VMOs at the local hospital/MPS? - What services and procedures could a GP be credentialled to provide locally? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What clinical facilities are available locally? - What clinical procedures are supported at the local hospital/MPS? |
| Stakeholders | Who are our main stakeholders? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is about more than just finding a doctor. Think about the role and contribution of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government Departments and Agencies - Health Service Organisations - Medical Professionals - Community Organisations - Academic Organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local government - Australian Government Department of Health - Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government - NSW Ministry of Health - Primary Health Networks - Regional (GP) Training Providers - NSW Rural Doctors Network - Local Health Districts - Hospital staff and management - Hospital advisory board or MPS Committee - Aboriginal Medical Services - Local GPs - Local medical specialists - Local nursing staff - Local allied health care providers - Community service groups such as the CWA, Lions Club, Rotary etc - Community support groups such as diabetes support - Community consultative groups - Local businesses - Big businesses with links to the community - Universities/medical schools - Rural Health Training Units - University Departments of Rural Health/Rural Clinical Schools |

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| Infrastructure | What facilities do we need now? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is available? - Who owns/will own the premises? - Who will maintain the premises? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can we expand/redesign an existing practice? - Can we modify existing premises? - Do new premises need to be built? |
| | What facilities might we need in the future? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching/training facilities? - Additional consulting rooms? - Additional treatment rooms? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do our proposals allow for expansion or modification? |
| | What equipment (office and clinical) will we need? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is needed? - What is available? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will select and purchase equipment? - Who will pay for it? - Who will maintain it? |
| Practice management | How will the practice be managed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will own the business? - Who will bear the financial risks? - Who will manage the business? - Who will be responsible for recruiting staff (administrative and clinical)? - Who will be responsible for staff supervision/management? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there any local organisations such as the Council willing to own and/or manage the practice? |
| | Patient Records | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will own patient records? - How can we keep patient records in the community? - How will we maintain confidentiality? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can we retain existing patient records? |
| Funding | Do we have the funds to implement our proposals? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What will it cost to establish? - What will it cost to maintain? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are we eligible for any government grants/programs? - How long will it take to secure funding? |
| | Will the practice be financially viable? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What services will be offered? - What is the demand for different services? - What proportion of patients will be bulk-billed? - How much will be received from incentive programs such as PIPs, Chronic Disease Management items etc? - Can any hospital services be 'cashed-out'? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will we need additional revenue to maintain services? |
| | Remuneration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What salary or package can we offer? - Can we provide or assist with suitable housing? - Can we provide a suitable vehicle? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would we be eligible for charity status with the Australian Taxation Office? |
| Staffing | Will we be able to recruit the necessary staff? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are our recruitment options? - How long will it take to find a suitable doctor? - How long will it take to find other health care providers? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talk with the local Primary Health Network and the NSW Rural Doctors Network about recruitment options. |
| Community expectations | Are our community's expectations realistic? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What clinical services does our community expect to be available locally? - Does our community expect a doctor to be available for consultations after hours? - Does our community expect a doctor to treat patients in the hospital? - How much is our community prepared and able to pay for medical services? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will our community accept practice closures on weekends and for periods of leave? - Will our community accept part time or remote services? |
| | Will our community welcome an overseas-trained doctor? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will we ensure an overseas trained doctor (and his/her family) feels welcome? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will we manage any cultural/social issues? - How can we manage any resistance to an overseas-trained doctor? |
| Our community | What does our community offer? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What support and assistance can we offer a new doctor and his/her family? - What other support & assistance would be helpful to a new doctor and his/her family? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can we assist with employment for partners? - Can we provide any social or family support such as child care? |
| | How can we best promote our community? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is attractive about our community? - What services and facilities are available locally? - What can we do to make our community more attractive to a prospective doctor and their family? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sports facilities - Educational facilities - Recreational facilities - Clubs and social groups |

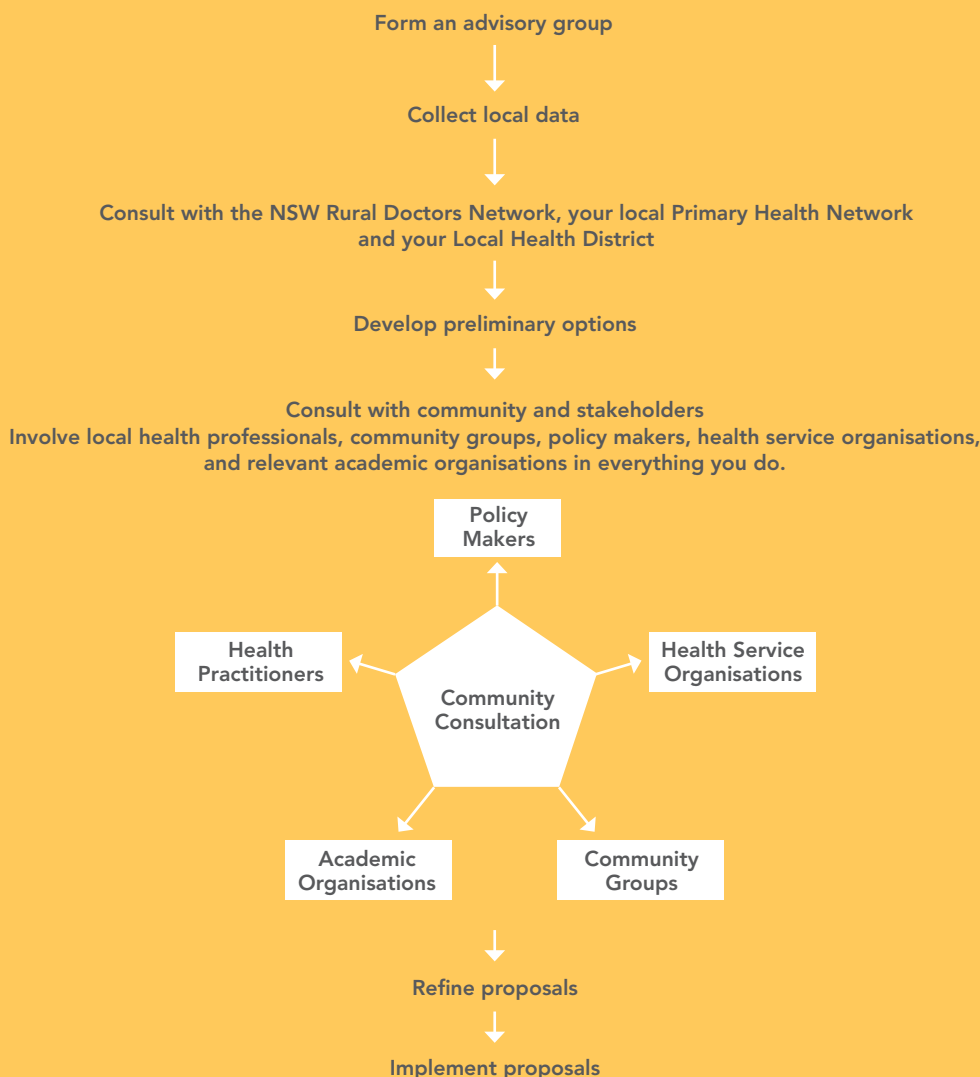
STEP 3 HOW DO WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

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| IMPLEMENTATION | Find a driver | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify someone to drive the process. Someone needs to take responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are they committed to making it happen? |
| | Form an advisory committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Involve people from different organisations and perspectives – Include people with the time and commitment to make things happen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are they committed to making it happen? – Bring key players together regularly and approach the problem together – Embrace people with different strengths and interests – Use the skills and knowledge of individuals and organisations |
| | Engage stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Get stakeholders on-side – Keep local clinicians involved and informed – Keep the community involved and informed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Hold regular community meetings |
| | Get recruitment advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Talk with the NSW Rural Doctors Network. They'll be able to help you with information about, and assistance with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provider numbers, • medical registration, • immigration, • advertising and • clinical assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Can we get area of need status? – Are we a district of workforce shortage? – Can we provide clinical supervision for an overseas-trained doctor? |
| | Get legal advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What insurance will we need? – What are the implications and risks of different employment structures? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Workers' compensation – Third party insurance – Professional indemnity insurance – Vicarious liability |
| | Get financial advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tax implications – Financial risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are the pros and cons of different legal structures? – What are the financial risks for the practice owner? – Are there any financial risks for stakeholders? |
| | Review your proposal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are our plans still realistic and appropriate? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What do we need to reconsider? |

STEP 4 HOW DO WE KEEP THE PRACTICE GOING?

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| MAINTENANCE | Orientation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure new staff members receive a comprehensive orientation to the practice and to the community – Ensure the family of new staff are welcomed in the community and introduced to relevant people – Ensure overseas-trained doctors receive a comprehensive orientation to the Australian medical system |
| | Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintain the relationships you've established with stakeholders – Keep the community informed of developments |
| | Staff training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure that all staff are supported and encouraged to maintain and develop their skills including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical staff • Nursing and allied health staff • Administrative staff |
| | Integration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support new recruits and their family throughout their placement – not just on their arrival |
| | Infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensure facilities and equipment are maintained and updated as necessary |
| | Professional satisfaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Acknowledge the efforts and contribution of all health care providers – Respect the doctor's privacy – Encourage and support staff to pursue professional opportunities such as teaching, training and research |
| | Holidays and leave | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assist in procuring locums to allow doctors to take leave – Be flexible with alternative options for care when locums are not available |
| | Succession Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recognise that the recruitment process will need to be repeated – perhaps often |
| Gracious exit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Don't expect your new recruit to stay more than a few years. Make it easy for your doctor to move on | |

WHERE DO WE START?



WHO CAN HELP?

NSW Rural Doctors Network

The NSW Rural Doctors Network (RDN) is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation funded by the Australian Department of Health and the NSW Ministry of Health. The RDN supports and assists rural communities to establish and maintain medical and health services, and can assist with all aspects of medical recruitment.

Contact details:

Level 3, 133 King St, Newcastle NSW 2300
Tel: 02 4924 8000
Fax: 02 4924 8010
info@nswrdn.com.au
www.nswrdn.com.au

Primary Health Networks

In July 2015, ten Primary Health Networks (PHNs) were established in NSW to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and to improve coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time. PHNs work directly with general practitioners, other primary and secondary health care providers and hospitals to facilitate improved outcomes for patients.

Health workforce is one of the six key priorities for PHNs.

NSW Ministry of Health

The NSW Ministry of Health is responsible for the operation and staffing of public hospitals, community health and ambulance services in NSW, and for the granting of Area of Need status to rural practices.

Contact details:

73 Miller St North Sydney NSW 2060
Locked Bag 961, North Sydney NSW 2059
Tel: 02 9391 9000
Fax: 02 9391 9101
www.health.nsw.gov.au

Local Health Districts

There are 15 Local Health Districts (LHDs) throughout NSW, including eight covering rural NSW. The eight rural LHDs are responsible for the day to day management and administration of public health services in rural NSW.

Contact details:

Far West LHD
Kincumber House, Morgan St,
Broken Hill NSW 2880
Tel: 08 8080 1333
www.fwlhd.health.nsw.gov.au

Hunter New England LHD (HNE Health)
Lookout Rd, New Lambton Heights NSW 2305
Tel: 02 4921 3000
www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD
Suite 2, Level 2, 67-71 King St,
Warrawong NSW 2502
Tel: 02 4221 6899
www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au

Mid North Coast LHD
Morton St, Port Macquarie NSW 2444
Tel: 1800 726 997
www.mnclhd.health.nsw.gov.au

Murrumbidgee LHD
63 Johnston St, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
Tel: 02 6933 9100
www.mlhd.health.nsw.gov.au

Northern NSW LHD
Crawford House, Hunter St, Lismore NSW 2480
Tel: 02 6620 2100
nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au

Southern NSW LHD
Queanbeyan Hospital, Queanbeyan NSW 2620
Tel: 02 6213 8336
www.snswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au

Western NSW LHD
23 Hawthorn St, Dubbo NSW 2830
Tel: 02 6841 2222
www.wnswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au