

6 May 2026

To: The Mayor / President and the CEO / General Manager,

**Invitation**  
**Rural Local Government Doctor Attraction & Retention Advocacy Session**

Many rural, remote and very remote local governments are spending significant amounts of ratepayer funds to attract and retain doctors to their communities. This includes providing cash incentives, housing, vehicles, medical facilities, and ongoing operational support.

While these efforts are often essential to keep services accessible, local government should not be carrying the cost of primary health care. It is a Commonwealth responsibility.

On behalf of the Local Government Rural Health Funding Alliance, we are writing to invite rural, remote and very remote Councils to be part of a national discussion to help change this.

The Local Government Rural Health Funding Alliance was formed in Western Australia in late 2024 by six founding local governments. These councils collectively represent around 8,000 residents in the Wheatbelt and Great Southern regions and contribute more than \$1.48m annually to attract and retain GPs, for some this is up to 16% of their annual rates income. The Alliance was formed to address the growing challenge of funding general practice and primary healthcare services in thin markets.

*Why we are holding this session?*

The Local Government Rural Health Funding Alliance will be your host for this session.

Rural, remote and very remote local governments across Australia, typically operating in thin markets are facing the same challenge: small populations, large geographical distances between towns, inadequate incentives for medical professionals, complex health needs and isolated professional services.

Local governments have stepped in because rural communities cannot go without equitable access to preventative and primary healthcare — but this has become a growing and unfair financial burden on ratepayers, as local governments forgo investment into roads, community facilities, services and activities.

The Alliance has already made a number of submissions and reports on this issue. They can be found at [www.ruralhealthfundingalliance.au](http://www.ruralhealthfundingalliance.au)



Preceding the commencement of ALGA's National General Assembly, we invite your rural Council to participate in an advocacy session that will:

- Build the national case showing the true cost to Councils of securing the services of doctors in thin markets (typically rural, remote and very remote local governments, small populations, most often recognised as Modified Monash 5, 6 or 7 communities)
- Share real examples and lived experience from rural and remote communities
- Strengthen coordinated advocacy to Australian and State Governments
- Support long-term, sustainable solutions so Councils are not forced to fund primary health services.

Your experience matters. Without it, the real impact on local government is not fully visible.

The session will be held on Monday 22 June 2026, between 9am – 12.30pm at the Crowne Plaza Canberra. Online participation will also be available. If your Council representatives are already in Canberra for the ALGA National General Assembly, this session is designed to fit alongside your visit.

We ask that your Council is represented by someone who understands both the operational and financial impacts, such as a Mayor or Councillor, Chief Executive Officer, General Manager, Director or Executive staff member.

By attending, your Council will help by making the financial burden visible, ensuring thin market communities can attract and retain doctors with the right incentives and models, building a stronger, united voice across all states and pushing for solutions that are fair, sustainable, and practical.

Please confirm your Council's attendance by 12 June 2026 by registering using the form [here](#) or on our website. Additional event details and joining instructions will be provided after registration.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss how your Council's experience could contribute, please contact [ea@lakegrace.wa.gov.au](mailto:ea@lakegrace.wa.gov.au) We encourage your participation and hope you can join us in Canberra or online.

Yours sincerely,

The founding members of the Local Government Rural Health Funding Alliance

*Cr Len Armstrong (President, Shire of Lake Grace); Cr Kate O'Keeffe (President, Shire of Gnowangerup); Cr Holly Cusack (President, Shire of Narembeen); Cr Roger Bilney (President, Shire of Kojonup); Cr Nathan Brown (President, Shire of Jerramungup); Cr Rachel Gibson (President, Shire of Ravensthorpe)*

## AGENDA

Monday 22 June 2026  
9am – 12.30pm  
Crowne Plaza Canberra

<b>8.30am</b>	<b>Networking over tea and coffee</b>
<b>9am</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
	Presentation by the <b>National Rural Health Commissioner</b> (TBC)
	Presentation by the <b>National Rural Health Alliance</b>
	<b>Local Government Rural Health Funding Alliance Advocacy</b>
	State of the WA sector – Local government provision of GP services with the <b>WA Local Government Association</b>
<b>10am</b>	<b>Local government stories:</b> supporting GP services in thin markets
<b>10.40am</b>	<b>Morning Tea Break</b>
<b>11am</b>	<b>Solutions + advocacy session</b> Identify shared issues, prioritise solutions, and agree next advocacy actions
<b>12.30pm</b>	<b>Close and light lunch</b>