



24 April 2020

## Rural GP Network secures more support for rural general practice

The New Zealand Rural General Practice Network has brokered an agreement with the Ministry of Health to extend locum support to keep vulnerable rural general practices operating as they come under mounting pressure as a result of Covid-19.

NZRGPN Chief Executive, Dalton Kelly, said with many surgeries cancelled and urban clinics running significantly reduced services, there are urban healthcare professionals with insufficient work. At the same time, the chronic shortage of healthcare professionals in rural communities remains and has been exacerbated by Covid-19.

“Many of New Zealand’s rural practices rely on a very small number of healthcare professionals and that number is dropping every year. Rural practices are increasingly reliant on short-term, contract and international health workers.

“Helping rural practices access the skills and expertise of other healthcare professionals can help ensure our rural communities get through this pandemic in good shape.”

Dalton Kelly said he was delighted that the Ministry so quickly acknowledged the opportunity to provide support for vulnerable rural practices.

He said the agreement with the Ministry was to fund locums into rural communities for a broad range of healthcare staff, including GPs, nurses, nurse practitioners and practice managers. There may be room for administrative locum support if there was a need.

“This agreement with the Ministry is a positive step that will enable us to better support the rural health workforce during a time of great need. It will help prevent burnout of key healthcare workers, protect their mental wellbeing and enable practices to continue serving their communities if, say, key staff become unwell or need a break.

“Today I will be emailing every rural general practice in New Zealand inviting them to let us know if they need healthcare support.”

Any rural practices needing additional locum support should contact:  
[enquiries@nzlocums.com](mailto:enquiries@nzlocums.com) or 0800 695 628.

Dalton Kelly: 027 231 0067