



CENTRAL NSW  
COUNCILS

**CENTROC**

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

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Approved by: Cr Ken Keith, Chair of Centroc and Mayor of Parkes Shire Council

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## **More work to be done on regional health workforce shortages**

A 'meeting of minds' in Parkes has resulted in a greater understanding of the crucial role local government has to play in regional health issues and a renewed resolve for government and industry stakeholders work collaboratively with Central NSW Councils (Centroc) to address the regional health workforce shortage.

"Health workforce is an issue for our region that is not going away," said Centroc Chair, Cr Ken Keith. "Although Councils don't traditionally work in the health sphere, the reality is we are the front line of our communities and therefore in an ideal position work on community capacity building initiatives to support growing a regional health workforce."

Centroc members and representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Western NSW Local Health District, Western Medicare Local, the NSW Rural Doctors Network, the Aboriginal Medical Service and Charles Sturt University, met in Parkes on 22 July to discuss the complex issue of unsatisfactory health workforce numbers in regional NSW.

The meeting included an update on the progress of Centroc's "Beyond the Range" health workforce recruitment program, as well as a presentation from Forbes Shire Council on its vision and investment in infrastructure and education to encourage a more diverse health workforce to the town.

"Forbes is a great example a local council's commitment to addressing the problem and recognising the link between essential medical services and the economic prosperity of a town," said Cr Keith. "There is no one size fits all solution, but councils can develop strategies to strengthen the long term sustainability of their health workforce."

Federal and state budget implications for health in Central NSW were discussed, as were programs being implemented by the NSW Rural Doctors Network, such as Go Rural and Bush Bursaries, designed to encourage medical students to take up positions in regional areas.

"Incentive programs are important, but we need to do more," Cr Keith said. "The bottom line is people in regional and remote communities have a shorter life expectancy than their city colleagues. This is an issue of critical importance to our communities."

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