



**RDAQ 2026**

*Stockyards & Stethoscopes*

**MEDICINE IN THE HEART OF QUEENSLAND**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**26 June 2026**

### **Sustainable rural workforce in focus on Day 2 of RDAQ2026 in Cairns**

Building a sustainable medical workforce for rural hospitals will take centre stage on Day 2 of the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (RDAQ) 2026 Conference in Cairns, with clinicians and sector leaders tackling one of the most pressing challenges facing regional healthcare.

Day two will include a panel session titled *‘Legacy vs Logic: Can we draw a roadmap towards a sustainable medical workforce for rural hospitals?’*

It will bring together voices from across the system to explore how workforce models must evolve to meet the needs of rural and remote communities.

Facilitated by RDAQ Rural Workforce Committee Chair Dr David Molhoek, the panel will feature Queensland Health Chief Medical Officer Dr Catherine McDougall, Chair of the RDAQ Rural & Remote Specialists and AST Network Dr Liam Weber, and North Queensland senior medical leader Dr Thomas Coombs.

RDAQ President Dr David Walker said the discussion reflected a critical area for rural healthcare reform.

“We know what the data is telling us, which is rural doctors love what they do, but they’re tired,” Dr Walker said.

“The recent state-wide [Medical Wellbeing Survey](#) confirmed what our members have been saying for years: fulfilment remains strong, but burnout risk is high, and that’s not sustainable for our workforce or our communities,” he said.

Dr Walker said the panel would explore key questions around workforce design, service models and system integration.

“What does the right-sized workforce actually look like for a rural hospital? What is the right model of care? And how do hospitals build capacity in a way that supports, rather than competes with primary care?” he said.

“These are not theoretical questions. These are real challenges being faced every day across rural Queensland, and they require coordinated, practical solutions.”

The session forms part of a broader conference program focused on advocacy, education, innovation and collaboration across the rural health sector.

Also on Day 2, Dr Walker will chair a discussion around the Single Employer Model during the morning session and participate in the annual Rural Health Policy Forum as part of the afternoon plenary, alongside other healthcare leaders, consumer advocates and Queensland's Special Commission for Rural and Regional Communities, Andrew Cripps.

"RDAQ and our conference is about more than discussion – we're about shaping solutions in a collaborative way," Dr Walker said.

"We bring together those delivering rural healthcare on the ground with those who influence policy and facilitate constructive discussions aimed at tangible change.

"Having the Special Commission represented at this forum is an important step in ensuring the challenges and opportunities facing rural communities are directly informing policy development.

"Our delegates will also hear from Michael Healy MP Member for Cairns on Saturday and welcoming Bree James MP, Assistant Minister for Tourism, Early Learning, Creative Industries and Far North Queensland."

"RDAQ will continue to advocate strongly for a healthcare system that is sustainable, supports its workforce, and delivers high-quality care for all Queenslanders no matter where they live."

RDAQ2026 conference is being held at Pullman Cairns International 25-27 June.

## **Friday, 26 June 2026 – Program Highlights**

### **Opening sessions:**

- 9.20am           Spotlight: Melioidosis – Dr Simon Smith
- 9.45am           Plenary panel: Continuity, community and care: What the single employer model might teach us

### **Concurrent sessions:**

- 11.00pm       Agricultural Zoonoses: Leptospirosis and Q Fever
- 12.00pm       Remote and Rural General Practice Peer Network forum
- 12.00pm       Low oestrogen states: A masterclass in misery – Dr Elizabeth Jackson

### **Afternoon sessions:**

- 1.55pm       Queensland Rural Generalist Pathway Graduation presentations
- 2.40pm       Plenary Panel: Legacy vs Logic: Can we draw a roadmap towards a sustainable medical workforce for rural hospitals?
- 2.55pm       Rural Health Policy Forum

View full program [HERE](#)

## **Media Contact**

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Media – register your attendance [media@rdaq.com.au](mailto:media@rdaq.com.au)

*All media must sign in at registration desk on arrival*