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Media Release

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL WILL IMPACT ON MEDICAL SERVICES IN HAY

Mayor Michael Rutledge expressed surprise and concern that a proposal from the Federal Government will change the rural classification for the Hay Medical Centre from Rural Remote to Rural Outer Regional from 1st July 2010. Such a change will drastically reduce the Federal Government financial incentives for medical centres such as Hay by up to \$70,000 per annum and means that Hay will compete with much bigger centres such as Griffith for the services of doctors.

Hay has traditionally found it difficult to attract quality General Practitioners the calibre of our present incumbents and this proposed change will make the process of replacing the current doctors much more difficult in the future. Ratepayers of Hay Shire have already contributed over \$1m of their funds to subsidise the medical services in Hay Cr Rutledge stated. Any additional impost on the ratepayers to further subsidise what should be the role of the State and Federal Government is just not acceptable.

Mayor Rutledge met with Federal Member for Farrer Sussan Ley yesterday together with representatives from other affected centres and it was agreed that a concerted attempt be made to have the draft proposal amended to provide a buffer zone in the adopted formula which would leave the centres of Hay and Deniliquin in the Rural Area Remote classification.

Mrs Ley expressed strong disappointment with the proposed change in classification and will endeavour to obtain a meeting with the Federal Minister for Rural and Regional Health Services the Hon Warren Snowdon MP at an early time to enable local representatives to express their concerns.

Mayor Rutledge also stated that any reduction in services provided by the current Medical Centre will have a corresponding impact on the Greater Southern Area Health Service through additional responsibility being transferred to the Hay Hospital.

Council has also written to the Federal Minister for Rural and Regional Health Services supporting the request for an urgent meeting to discuss the situation.

