



## Senator Hollie Hughes

Liberal Patron Senator for the Hunter Region

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### Media Release

#### Maitland reclassified to help reduce doctor shortage

GP clinics in Maitland can now recruit overseas trained doctors after the region successfully campaigned to have its Distribution Priority Area (DPA) status reviewed.

**Maitland** is now classified as DPA following an application to the Federal Liberal and Nationals Government's "exceptional circumstances" review.

**Liberal Patron Senator for the Hunter Region, Hollie Hughes**, said the successful applications from the **Rutherford Medical Centre**, **Providence Medical Thornton**, the **Gillieston Heights Medical Centre/Abermain Surgery** with the support of the **Rural Doctors Network** and the **Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network** means local medical practices in the catchment have more opportunity to address local GP doctor shortages.

"This change gives local GP practices a larger pool of doctors to recruit from, which should make it easier for clinics to secure more doctors for Maitland and surrounding areas," Senator Hughes said.

"The DPA classification identifies regions where people find it harder to see a doctor, based on the needs of the community. Although the classification is updated each year, several medical practices in this area indicated they had been hit by sudden and unexpected changes and unmet demand during the pandemic period and had found it especially difficult to recruit doctors to the area."

Senator Hughes said the DPA classification does not guarantee a doctor, but it allows medical practices in DPA catchments to recruit doctors who trained overseas.

"Having enough doctors is fundamental to any community and that's even more true when you live or work in a regional centre such as Maitland. For people of all ages, from babies to the elderly, being able to see a doctor when you have an illness or injury is important to your health and wellbeing," Senator Hughes said.

**Federal Regional Health Minister, Dr David Gillespie** said he set up the review process to ensure that an area's DPA status was based on contemporaneous information, supported vulnerable patient cohorts and was responsive to significant workforce and population changes.

The exceptional circumstances review applications were considered by an independent working group, which made recommendations to Minister Gillespie.

As well as changes to the health workforce or services, the review considers demographics, and more up to date data which was not available at the time of the previous DPA update.

The DPA indicator has been in place for three years, helping prioritise access to doctors for underserviced rural areas.

It is one of many Federal Coalition Government initiatives to address the maldistribution of the medical workforce and encourage doctors under location restrictions to work in regional, rural and remote communities.

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