



The Hon Warren Snowdon MP
Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health
and Regional Services Delivery

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear *Julia* Mrs Irwin,

Thank you for your letter of 9 September 2009 to the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, regarding the current petition under the Committee's consideration concerning the proposed change to the rural classification of Gawler. Your letter has been referred to me as the Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery.

I note that the petitioners reject the introduction of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas (ASGC-RA) system and have put forward their views on its implications on the local workforce and ability to provide after-hours and emergency services in the Gawler area.

As I mentioned in my previous correspondence of 24 September 2009, the Australian Government has agreed to Gawler GP Inc using the term 'Rural in Transition', however, the geographical classification of Gawler will remain as ASGC-RA1 (Major City).

I appreciate that there are local issues with respect to Gawler and where possible these have been responded to by the Government. Further, the Government has agreed to some changes in the training for Rural and Remote Procedural GPs program that address issues of concern in a number of communities around Australia, including Gawler.

However, I must reiterate that the introduction of the ASGC-RA classification system forms a basis for rural health reform to ensure that rural programs are targeted to areas of greatest need. Moving to ASGC-RA will strengthen support to rural and remote communities, and ensure a more equitable distribution of the medical workforce.

I can assure you that the Government will be closely monitoring the success of the transition to the ASGC-RA on the Gawler community, particularly with regard to changes to doctor numbers.

I trust that the above information is of use.

Yours sincerely

13 NOV 2009

WARREN SNOWDON

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