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MEDIA RELEASE

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TUROSS COMMUNITY PAST BREAKING POINT ON HEALTH ACCESS DEMANDS EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE FUNDING ON FAR SOUTH COAST

The Tuross Head Progress Association (THPA) is leading the call for funding and delivery of equitable health care for all communities on the NSW far south coast.

Over the last 40 years governments from both major political parties have treated rural communities like Tuross Head with indifference and neglect. They have failed the test of equity. This has resulted in higher death rates and prolonged periods of illness compared to communities in metropolitan areas.

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has also been calling for urgent investment in rural health care in what NRHA Chief Executive Susi Tegen has called the appalling health spending deficit in rural Australia. This has compounded the health problems faced by our rural communities.

The NRHA report in June 2023¹ quantified the rural health deficit at \$6.55 billion annually or \$850 per person per annum (approx. \$1,000 adjusted for inflation) for a population of more than 7 million people in rural Australia.

This has meant an \$80 million/year deficit for the far south coast, \$1 billion over the life of the Labor and previous Lib/Nat governments. In Tuross Head it is \$2.7 million per year which would have provided three full time resident GPs and three nurses plus some primary care services where we have had next to none.

The proposal by the member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips MP, to upgrade the Bateman's Bay Urgent Care Clinic (BB UCC)² when the rest of the region's higher priority needs continue to be ignored was the breaking point for THPA and we resolved to act. The UCC extension is a bandaid solution for one small part of the region.

The BB UCC represents an additional expenditure of an estimated \$2-2.5 million per year but the shortfall in government expenditure in Batemans Bay alone is approximately \$18 million per year, a shortfall of \$15.5 million.

The biggest and most urgent issues/gaps are with GP practice waiting times and lack of a healthcare workforce. The backlog of services from GPs in the region is approximately 40,000 per year with no solution provided.

To date, neither political party has put forward any proposal to fully address these issues for the far south coast.

The THPA has been raising funding and access shortfalls for three years and recently wrote to the federal members for Gilmore and Eden-Monaro, "*We remain committed to helping the government take the urgent reform actions required to lift the burden of inadequate access to care in our far south coast community.*" We received no response. Both major political parties have failed to provide any solutions in real-time.

During the 2025 federal election campaign, THPA will seek support from other far south coast community organisations to call on both major parties to commit to equity of access and funding for medical care.

Our communities must not continue to suffer the excess burden of ill health and early deaths. Our communities deserve fairness in funding and access to healthcare.

Dr. Arn Sprogis (retd.) Chair THPA Health Subcommittee, 0412082259

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¹ [Evidence base for additional investment in rural health in Australia](#), National Rural Health Alliance website, June 2023

² [MEDIA RELEASE: Petition calls for expanded Medicare Urgent Care Clinic at Batemans Bay](#)