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## Down a GP? You're not alone

The NSW Farmers' Association says the situation facing many communities because of a lack of doctors in rural areas is dire.

Speaking from the Australian Medical Association's Rural Health Crisis Summit in Canberra, NSW Farmers' Association Vice President and Rural Affairs Committee Chair Alan Brown says the worsening medical workforce shortage can be seen in many NSW communities.

"A recent example is the town of Baradine in north western NSW, which lost it's only GP about 2 months ago. Greater Western Area Health has guaranteed a locum for 3 months, which has been organised with a fortnightly turn over," Mr Brown said.

"That means that there's no continuity of care for that community, as every 2 weeks they get a different locum," he said.

"Anyone needing greater medical attention has to travel 45 kilometres into Coonabarabran, which itself recently lost 2 trainee doctors.

"The other nearby community of Coonamble is down to one doctor, with reports of a 3 week waiting list.

"This is a region that already has only one doctor for every 1300 people, and where visiting a doctor is often not just a case of ducking down the road," Mr Brown said.

Mr Brown says these examples are not one offs, but indicate the desperate situation facing many towns struggling during the longest drought on record.

"The lack of services in rural towns means a lower standard of health for people in the country and more pressure on the medical services that remain," he said.

"New initiatives must be looked into to encourage medical services into rural NSW. We would strongly hope that the AMA's meeting today will see suggestions on how we can move forward," Mr Brown concluded.

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***Fast fact: Over a 13 year period prices received by Australian farmers increased by 2.3% a year, while costs increased by 4.8%***