**Attachment B**

# Exceptional circumstances assessments for regions with GP services access concerns

The Australian Government uses the Distribution Priority Area (DPA) indicator to identify distribution challenges in Australia’s medical workforce. DPA is calculated by comparing the actual level of GP services provided to a GP catchment with the level of services the same community should receive if they were receiving a benchmark level of GP Services.

DPA is an impartial mechanism which relies on the most recently available Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) demographic data (including age, gender and socio-economic status) as well as Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) billing data to assess levels of medical service provision throughout Australia. The DPA is reviewed and updated annually to reflect the latest available data.

The Government also recognises that sometimes, an area can face pressures that are not picked up in the DPA assessment.

Additional factors are now able to be considered alongside an area’s non-DPA status. This assessment may see an area become, for that year, DPA to support recruitment of a broader pool of doctors into the area. This should address any GP services shortfall arising from those additional factors.

The Distribution Working Group (DWG) will assess applications seeking a change to an area’s non-DPA status.

Anyone can apply for an assessment. Applicants will need to work with the Rural Workforce Agency (RWA) and the Department of Health to gather the information to be assessed.

The DWG will review the non-DPA status of an area based on the following criteria:

1. **Support of the local Rural Health Workforce Agency (RWA)**

The application for exceptional circumstances must have the support and engagement of the RWA in their state/territory. The area must demonstrate the RWA is working with them to address workforce concerns and that steps have been or are being taken to implement RWA advice or support actions.

1. **Changes to health services, workforce or health system**

The area can demonstrate an unexpected large change to the health workforce resulting in a substantial drop in health services to the community that is not recognised in the last DPA update. This may include changes in services arrangements, for example doctor retirements (without replacement), hospital closures or an unexpected sharp increase in population.

1. **Patient demographics or changes**

The patient cohort is within a demographic that is underserviced, or requires a specialised nature of service. Socio-economic status, proportion of ageing, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the area are all able to be considered.

1. **Absence of services**

The area can demonstrate difficulties in recruiting or retaining medical practitioners at a scale that is measurably different to similar communities and would warrant discretion being applied within health workforce programs.

## How requests for review are considered

* The request for review **must** have the support and involvement of the Rural Workforce Agency (RWA) in the state or territory.
* Claims against the Criteria should be sent to [rural.distribution@health.gov.au](mailto:rural.distribution@health.gov.au) along with supporting documentation from the RWA, other supporting documentation or letters of support.
* Requests will be assessed by the DWG within 3 weeks of submission.
* The Department of Health will advise of the outcome within 2 weeks of the DWG decision date.
* DWG outcomes will also be published online to ensure transparency.

1. **APPLICATION FORM**

**Request for Exceptional Circumstances Assessment of   
non-Distribution Priority Area (DPA) status**

*This form is to be completed by the applicant and sent to the relevant Rural Workforce Agency.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date of Application:** |  |
| 1. **Basic Information** | |
| Name and position of applicant: |  |
| Contact name: |  |
| Contact phone number: |  |
| Contact email |  |
| 1. **Summary of Issues** | |
| 1. **Has there been a significant change in Health Workforce in the area?** Please describe (e.g. how many doctors have left the area? Has there been an increase in demand for GP services in the area?) | |
| 1. **Is the local Rural Workforce Agency in your state or territory involved?** What advice/support has been provided to increase the workforce? | |
| 1. **Has there been a significant change to the patient demographics or access to services in the area?**  Please describe | |

1. **Submission for Exceptional Circumstances Assessment of   
   non-Distribution Priority Area (DPA) status**

*This form is to be completed by a Rural Workforce Agency.*

Please email this form and any supporting information to [rural.distribution@health.gov.au](mailto:rural.distribution@health.gov.au).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date Application submitted:** |  | |
| 1. **RWA support** | | |
| Name of RWA / PHN: |  | |
| RWA / PHN Contact name: |  | |
| RWA / PHN Contact phone number: |  | |
| RWA / PHN email: |  | |
| Town/Area for review: |  | |
| Medical Practices requesting review (if applicable): |  | |
| Summary of main issue(s): |  | |
| Summary of support provided to area to address recent workforce concerns including advice given, action taken or to be taken. |  | |
| 1. **Changes to Health Workforce (since 1 January 2021)** | | |
| 1. Has there been a significant change in Health Workforce in the area? | | * Yes *– Go to next question* * No – *Go to Question 3* |
| 1. How many doctors have left the area: | |  |
| 1. How many doctors have been employed in the area: | |  |
| 1. Has there been an increase in demand for GP services in the area: | | * Yes *– Go to next question* * No – *Go to Question 3* |
| 1. Explain and provide evidence as to increase in demand. | | |
| 1. **Patient demographic and patient flow** | | |
| 1. Is the majority of the patient cohort within a demographic that is underserviced? | | * Yes *– Go to next question* * No – *Go to question 3.c.* |
| 1. What demographic is being underserviced? | |  |
| 1. Does the majority of the patient cohort require a specialised nature of service? | | * Yes – *Go to next question* * No – *Go to question 4* |
| 1. What is the nature of this service? Is there evidence of patient travel from other catchments? | | |
| 1. **Absence of services** | | |
| * 1. Is the area experiencing difficulty in recruiting or retaining medical practitioners at a scale that is markedly different to similar communities? | | * Yes – *Go to next question* * No – *Go to question 5* |
| * 1. Demonstrate how this area is experiencing difficulty in recruiting or retaining medical practitioners. | | |

Please email this form and any supporting documentation that supports the request for Exceptional Circumstances Review of the Distribution Priority Area (DPA) classification to: [rural.distribution@health.gov.au](mailto:rural.distribution@health.gov.au).

1. **Request for Exceptional Circumstances Assessment of   
   non-Distribution Priority Area (DPA) status**

*This information summarises information for the Distribution Working Group (DWG). Any confidential detail will be removed to enable information to be published online.*

Requests from areas to review their non-DPA status can now be assessed. The DWG considers applications for a change to DPA status where there are additional factors that may not be considered in calculating the DPA indicator or factors have arisen and are not present in the latest available data.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Application Details** | | | | |
| **Date of Application:** |  | | | |
| **Application Number:** |  | | | |
| **Town / Area:** |  | | | |
| **Review requested by:** |  | | | |
| **Date reviewed by DWG:** |  | | | |
| **Request supported by the DWG:** |  | | | |
| **DPA data:** | **YEAR** | **DPA  GPs / BMP** | **Benchmark Ratio** | **% Above Benchmark** |
| 2020 | GPs |  |  |
| BMP |  |  |
| 2021 | GPs |  |  |
| BMP |  |  |
| **Summary of**  **Assessment outcome** |  | | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessment** | |
| 1. **Support of the Rural Workforce Agency** Any request for exceptional circumstances consideration **must** have the support of the respective Rural Workforce Agency (see attached form) and the practice must have been actively working with the RWA to resolve recruitment issues. | |
| **Supporting evidence from Rural Workforce Agency:** | |
| **Summary of discussion by Distribution Working Group:** | |
| Does the area meet the criteria? | * Yes * No |
| Does the Distribution Working Group support the request on **this** criteria? | * Yes * No |
| 1. **Changes to Health Workforce** The area can demonstrate an unexpected large change to the Health Workforce resulting in a substantial drop in health services to the community. | |
| Please outline below and include details on:   1. How many doctors have left the area; 2. How many doctors have been employed in the area; 3. Has there been an increase in demand for GP services; and 4. Are there doctors planning on retiring in the near future. | |
| **Supporting evidence:** | |
| **Summary of discussion by Distribution Working Group:** | |
| Does the area meet the criteria? | * Yes * No |
| Does the Distribution Working Group support the request on **this** criteria? | * Yes * No |
| 1. **Patient demographics changes** The majority of the patient cohort is within a demographic that is underserviced, or requires a specialised nature of service. The Department will consider socio-economic status, proportion of ageing, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the area. | |
| Please outline below and include details on:   1. Is the majority of the patient cohort within a demographic that is underserviced? 2. What demographic is being underserviced? 3. Does the majority of the patient cohort require a specialised nature of service? 4. What is the nature of this service? | |
| **Supporting evidence:** | |
| **Summary of discussion by Distribution Working Group:** | |
| Does the area meet the criteria? | * Yes * No |
| Does the Distribution Working Group support the request on **this** criteria? | * Yes * No |
| 1. **Absence of services** The area can demonstrate difficulties in recruiting or retaining medical practitioners at a scale that is markedly different to similar communities. | |
| Please outline below and include details on:   1. Is the area experiencing difficulty in recruiting or retaining medical practitioners at a scale that is markedly different to similar communities? 2. Demonstrate how this area is experiencing difficulty in recruiting or retaining medical practitioners. | |
| **Supporting evidence:** | |
| **Summary of discussion by Distribution Working Group:** | |
| Does the area meet the criteria? | * Yes * No |
| Does the Distribution Working Group support the request on **this** criteria? | * Yes * No |