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Burnt-out doctor's resignation forces change in one-GP town of Cloncurry

July 15, 2025

— Categories: Breaking News



The resignation of Cloncurry's sole General Practitioner (GP), Dr Cameron Hoare, due to burnout has exposed critical challenges in healthcare delivery for the remote Queensland town. The move has triggered urgent efforts to stabilise medical services and highlights the broader crisis facing rural medicine.

Dr Hoare, who served as medical superintendent at Cloncurry Hospital and ran Ramsay Street General Practice, announced his departure in March 2025, citing “classic burnout” after a decade of 50 to 60-hour workweeks. “It’s the community that suffers... it’s sad that this has become an accepted event across rural Australia,” he told the North Queensland Register, emphasising the strain of balancing hospital and private practice duties. His exit has left Cloncurry, a town of around 3,500 people located two days’ drive northwest of Brisbane, facing a significant healthcare gap.

Unlike most rural clinics, the privately run practice was not managed by Queensland Health but relied on local council support. Cloncurry Mayor Greg Campbell noted the council contributed approximately \$100,000 annually to sustain the clinic.

In response, Queensland Health negotiated with Dr Michael Clements, who purchased the practice in June 2025. An experienced rural GP known for revitalising at-risk clinics, Dr Clements told the North Queensland Register, “Cloncurry has fantastic potential to be a rural generalist training hub.” Queensland Health also appointed Dr Jillian McClurry as the new regional medical services director, transferring from Sarina Hospital. The restructuring includes provision for six full-time equivalent staff shared between the hospital and practice, aiming to reduce workloads and alleviate fatigue. The Cloncurry Shire Council has endorsed these initiatives as part of a long-term plan to secure sustainable healthcare.

Critics argue the Labor government’s reliance on federal Medicare funding and urgent care clinics fails to resolve systemic GP shortages. Shadow Health Minister Anne Ruston has called for more comprehensive

rural health policies, warning that current measures fall short of addressing ongoing challenges.

With Dr Clements' focus on preventative health and training, Cloncurry's healthcare overhaul may become a model for other rural communities. However, persistent government inaction risks leaving many towns vulnerable to similar crises.