

## **PRINCIPAL MEDICAL OFFICER**

This year again brought up another series of unique challenges to our rural Practice, in particular the issue of budgetary constraints dominated this years outcomes and practice. It is a sad by unfortunate fact that years of budgetary tightening would one day reach a critical point and 2003/2004 was certainly the year when this occurred. One would hope that the management of the Region will see from what happened this year that the Meningie and Coorong district cannot sustain an adequate health service without a significant increase in funding to reflect the growing complexity of medical problems in an aging community in an area which is growing. It is clear that any statistical projections of the community based on the previous census was incorrect (as had been predicted). This is a thriving growing community, which will continue to evolve due to its proximity to the coastline and its relative proximity to Adelaide.

Having three doctors now full time in the Practice has made the workings of general practice more streamlined and has given the community greater access to doctors at a time when this is considered a major problem throughout the nation. There has been a significant development and improvement in Mental Health Services through the projects sponsored by the Murray Mallee Division of General Practice. We now have a visiting psychiatrist and psychologist on a regular basis. There is still room for improvement, in particular to have a local mental health worker would be a major advantage, due to the difficulty in accessing services from Murray Bridge.

The Practice continues to work closely with Outreach and various other arms of the state government based health services and continue to build partnerships for the mutual benefit of the community.

We look forward to 2004/2005, continuing the relationship between the medical staff and the hospital and outreach services and hope that the budgetary matters will be addressed by those with the power to do so.

**Dr D G Kerrigan**  
Principal Medical Officer