



Media release
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Closure of Echuca Theatre Questionable

The Rural Doctors Association of Victoria (RDAV) has questioned the extended closure of theatre facilities for routine surgery at Echuca Hospital from 2 to 22 April 2007, an unusually long period of time.

“Added to the 2 weeks at Christmas that the theatre was closed for routine surgery, this makes 5 weeks or nearly 10% of the entire year” RDAV President, Dr Mike Moynihan, said.

“This is enough to severely disadvantage the very substantial population served by Echuca Hospital and to cause further delays in waiting times for essential surgery.

“During such periods of closure there also tends to be a pile up of semi-urgent surgery, and it takes time to then crank up the system again while waiting lists are adjusted.

“This extended period of closure is long enough for us to suspect there may be financial motives behind the closure and it suggests underfunding by the Victorian Government is the main cause.

“Such closures, which are increasingly common in Victoria’s remaining rural hospitals, are the thin end of the wedge for further health service cutbacks in rural areas, and rural Victorians must not on any account accept them at face value.

“New rural hospital buildings are of no use unless they are matched by adequate recurrent funding and programs to attract doctors, nurses and other health professionals to rural areas.

“Is Echuca to become a suburb of Bendigo in terms of advanced medical care? The time taken to travel on the Northern Highway is far too great for that, the population of Echuca and its surrounds far too large, and the resulting patient load pressures on Bendigo’s health system far too much.

“We urge the Victorian Government to work closely with Echuca Regional Health to get routine surgery up and running again at Echuca Hospital much sooner than 22 April 2007.”

For interviews, contact Dr Mike Moynihan on tel: (03) 5033 1711 bh or 0427 331 370.