



## **RURAL SERVICES**

It is United**Future** policy to:

- Support the family farm concept.
- Emphasise community-based social programmes, together with contestable regional development, to assist the revitalisation of rural communities.
- Ensure that a significant proportion of fuel taxes collected within a specific region are earmarked for improvements to roads in that region, rather than being diverted into the Crown Account.
- Increase the Financial Assistance Rate (FAR) that is paid by central government to local authorities for the construction and maintenance of local roads up to 80% of their total costs as a first step to reducing the rates burden faced by many rural communities.
- Introduce bonding options for graduates in medicine and nursing to work in rural areas.
- Support Rural GP services by encouraging medical students to consider rural general practice, supporting the professional development of rural GPs, providing sufficient funding for locum cover, increasing financial incentives for rural GPs, supporting Rural Nurse Practitioners as a new field of practice for senior nurses, and by establishing appropriate practitioner to patient ratios that will ensure quality of care and reduce the risk of burnout.
- Ensure that ambulance and air rescue services are maintained at a level that does not compromise public safety
- Extend Mobile Surgical Services.
- Recognise the importance of rural schools beyond just their educational function in rural communities.
- Support rural schools by ensuring that their operations grants are sufficient to meet the costs to schools of providing the learning opportunities that government expects, including sustainable, high-speed broadband.
- Allow rural schools that are difficult to staff to pay more to attract quality teachers, and introduce bonding for teachers in areas where there are shortages through the use of student loan write-offs.
- Re-focus the Correspondence School so that it is not compromised in its delivery of education for rural children by its other role as a provider of education for at-risk students, and ensure that it is adequately resourced to meet the needs of all distance learners.
- Establish 'families' of schools to improve coordination between pre-school, primary and secondary schools in a given area, with a view to sharing resources such as computers and sporting equipment, and holding quarterly meetings of representatives from boards of trustees.
- Ensure that school bus services are sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of rural communities.
- Establish a network of 'rural education posts' to serve as adult and community education information centres and meeting places and providers, utilising existing educational facilities.
- Ensure that the Tertiary Education Commission recognises the importance of education for the development of the agricultural workforce, and funds vocational courses that meet the needs of the sector.
- Ensure adequate police coverage of rural areas.

- Establish community safety plans with police, local bodies and communities, building local knowledge and community relationships, and ensure that all households can receive information about local policing issues.
- Increase staffing levels at Police Communications Centres to ensure that 111 calls are responded to promptly and effectively, and consider returning them to control at the regional level to utilise local knowledge.