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MEDIA RELEASE

PORT ADELAIDE DEFENDER BACKS RURAL PHARMACY RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

Port Adelaide defender, Darryl Wakelin, has thrown his weight behind a campaign to encourage more rural and regional students to choose pharmacy as a career.

The campaign is an ongoing initiative by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing designed to address the shortage of rural and regional pharmacists. It encourages students from country areas to study pharmacy in the expectation they are more likely to take up rural employment after graduation.

While he is best known as an AFL footballer, Wakelin is a pharmacist who grew up on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia.

He advises students that pharmacy is a much broader and more interesting career than is often anticipated, especially in rural settings.

“At the end of high school when I chose to study pharmacy at university, I did so mainly because of security - I knew there was lots of work for pharmacists.

“I made the decision not really knowing very much about what the actual work would be like but I feel really lucky now. It was a surprise. It’s a great career with a whole lot of options. Retail pharmacy is what most people think about, but you can also work in hospitals and become a clinical pharmacologist.

“It also opens up travel opportunities. Working as a locum lets you travel very extensively, and you can even go overseas and work in the UK,” he said.

Wakelin did his internship in Adelaide where he worked at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in clinical pharmacology in the renal unit, and also in oncology.

“I also had a lot of retail experience and am now involved in the ownership of three pharmacies in the Northern Territory. A good thing about owning your own pharmacy business is that you get involved in all aspects of management – there’s far more to it than just standing behind the counter.

“And you get very involved in the community – and I think that happens a lot more in the country,” he added. “In the Northern Territory we do a lot of work with indigenous communities. We do medication reviews for over 1000 patients and work closely with doctors and health workers. It’s very fulfilling work.”

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The program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and managed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. The campaign includes a television commercial featuring radio personality Adam Spencer which will air in rural and regional areas, supported by the distribution of around 10,000 brochures throughout non-metropolitan high schools, specialist indigenous press and radio advertising.

Thirty scholarships at \$10,000 per annum are available to support students from rural communities to undertake studies in pharmacy. Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be eligible for scholarships of \$15,000 per annum.

The choice of pharmacy as a career has already brought Darryl Wakelin great satisfaction but he thinks the best is still to come when he finally hangs up his boots.

“There’ll be the opportunity to go back to my roots and own a pharmacy in a country town. It’s pretty special.”

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