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Show and tell the truth about country living

Country Queenslanders visiting Brisbane for the annual Ekka face the prospect of dying 12 years earlier than city dwellers.

AMA Queensland President Dr Chris Zappala said it was time for the city and the bush to unite in demanding improved health services for rural Queensland.

"If you live in rural, regional and remote areas – and let's face it, that's a huge part of our state – your health is likely to be significantly worse than people in metropolitan areas," Dr Zappala said.

"The statistics are staggering – the death rate in rural Queensland is 55 per cent higher than in major citiesⁱ.

"It's not fair and the figures are only going to get worse unless the State Government urgently intervenes."

Dr Zappala said living in rural and remote areas could cut 12 years from a Queenslanders' life expectancy.ⁱⁱ

"Queenslanders living in remote parts of the state are 48 per cent more likely to be obese, 40 per cent more likely to die from coronary heart disease and almost two and a half times more likely to commit suicideⁱⁱⁱ," he said.

"We can't just blame geography and the tyranny of distance.

"Rural health needs a funding boost if we are going to see any real improvement in health outcomes.

"The State Government must rebuild vital health infrastructure and incentivise medical professionals to work in rural areas."

He said programs that encourage medical students and young doctors to spend time in rural Queensland would also make a positive difference.

"We know that doctors from rural backgrounds and those who spend time training in regional town are more likely to take up long-term practice there," Dr Zappala said.

"Doing general practice placement or specialist training gives young doctors an insight into the huge rewards, individually and professionally, to be had from practising in the regions."

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ⁱ Queensland Health. 2014. *The health of Queenslanders 2014. Fifth report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland.*

ⁱⁱ *ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid.*