

Marysville clinic practice of the year

The Marysville Medical Clinic, Buxton, has been named the winner of The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) 2009 Victoria General Practice of the Year Award.

The GP of the Year award was presented during a dinner at the annual conference for general practice in Perth. RACGP president, Dr Chris Mitchell congratulated the doctors and staff of The Marysville Medical Clinic and thanked them for their outstanding service to both the general practice profession and their local community.

The Marysville Medical Clinic burnt to the ground. So too did the home of the solo rural GP, Lachlan Fraser.

"We are always proud to celebrate the achievements of our profession, but never more so than this year," Dr Morton Rawlin, Chair of the RACGP Victoria Faculty said.

"This award is a celebration of triumph over adversity. On Black Saturday, 7 February 2009.

"What followed is an inspirational story of professional and community support and cooperation. Initially a Melbourne GP, Dr Margaret Dawson, and radiation oncologist Dr Mike Dally conducted clinics in a house in Buxton, 12 kilometres north of Marysville.

"Mike and his wife Sue had lost their part-time home in Marysville, whilst Margaret and her husband defended their part-time property in Buxton.

"The relocated clinic was rapidly fitted out with the cooperation and goodwill of the Alexandra Community Health Service, chiefly Heather Byrne and Debbie Skinner-Louis, Eastern Ranges General Practice Association (ERGPA), North East Division of General Practice, and Rural Workforce Agency of Victoria.

"Donated equipment came from ERGPA via their CEO Kristen Michaels, with other contributions from Melbourne doctors and offers from



Heather Byrne, CEO Alexandra District Hospital; Kristen Michaels, CEO Eastern Ranges GP Association; Anne-Marie Ellis, practice manager and nurse Marysville Medical Clinic; Dr Rod Travena, Thomas Street Family Medical Clinic, Brighton; and Dr Lachlan Fraser

room. Anne Marie Ellis, the practice nurse and manager for the Marysville Clinic worked tirelessly to re-establish the administrative and medical needs of the clinic.

"The practice records stored at the clinic and off-site back-up copies were lost in the fires, which also destroyed the part-time nurse/secretary's home in Marysville. Fortunately a much earlier version of the files was recovered from nearby Alexandra to assist the process.

"Dr Rod Travena and Dr Stephen Trumble from The Thomas Street Family Medical Clinic from bayside Melbourne saw that they had the capacity to help a colleague get back on his feet.

"The GPs provided weekly locum sessions to support Dr Fraser in his personal recovery and to re-build the practice, his home, and the community of Marysville. Dr Travena continues this vital work, now assisted by Dr Michael Wong.

"One of the major contributions The Marysville Medical Clinic has made to the community's recovery is to provide a standard medical service at the heart of the destruction.

"Trauma and grief counselling are naturally high on the list of services provided but more regular health activities such as cholesterol management, blood pressure control and flu vaccination provides a degree of

normality to people who have lost everything."

The General Practice of the Year Award recognises: the outstanding work of general practices; the commitment of the practice to ongoing quality improvements; the standard of facilities offered to patients and staff; and the services offered to the local community.

The RACGP sets and maintains the standards for quality clinical practice, education and training, and research in Australian general practice, and represents Australia's urban and rural general practitioners. The RACGP awards are an acknowledgment by the profession of excellence in general practice.

Dr Lachlan Fraser said the award for

the Marysville Medical Clinic comprising practice manager and nurse Anne-Marie Ellis, secretary and nurse Robyn Fitzpatrick, and himself also includes everyone who helped to re-establish the practice and keep it running.

This allowed him to continue some medical work and practice management while he spent much time and energy on community reconstruction, as well as his own personal recovery tasks.

"The award recognises the accredited practice that we had built up. It encourages us to continue in to the future with our plans to return to Marysville in school term two 2010, next to the new school and kindergarten in Gallipoli Park," Dr Fraser said.