

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **American-born doctor recognised for creating change at Kingaroy Hospital**

Kingaroy Hospital medical superintendent Dr Raymond “RT” Lewandowski came to Australia with the intention of staying for one year.

This year marks five years since the American-born doctor set down roots in the South Burnett and in that time he has established himself as a valued member of the hospital staff.

“I’ve been in Kingaroy for five years; that’s the second longest time I have spent in the one place,” Dr Lewandowski said.

Growing up in rural Missouri in the USA and coming from a naval family, Dr Lewandowski has lived in a variety of locations.

“I had a year off, known as a sabbatical in the US, and I wanted to see Australia,” he said.

“It was during that time that a job became available in Kingaroy. I applied with the intention of only staying for one year.”

The past five years have been a busy time for Dr Lewandowski as he has worked to turn around the waiting times for elective surgeries and build upon the hospital’s morale.

And his achievements have not gone unnoticed.

In January this year, Dr Lewandowski was presented with a Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS) staff award for his kind and personable approach to fostering better patient outcomes at the hospital.

The second annual staff awards were opened to all of the health service’s 5100 staff members and reward and recognise significant staff achievements. This year’ the awards attracted more than 100 nominations.

Dr Lewandowski was presented with the “vision” award, which is based on the DDHHS’s vision “to deliver excellence in rural and regional healthcare”.

He was nominated by DDHHS Cluster Operationa Manager for the South Burnett, Peta Rutherford, and selected as the eventual winner by DDHHS executives.

“It was nice to receive that recognition and it shows that we are doing great things in Kingaroy,” he said.

“However, I didn’t do all of these things by myself. There is a team of clinicians, support staff and other leaders who are all part of it.”

In the past two years, Dr Lewandowski has overseen the reintroduction of general surgical procedures such as endoscopies in the hospital's operating theatre..

"We are now in theatre four out of five days a week," he said.

The award also recognised Dr Lewandoski's commitment to supporting the next generation of doctors, in turn inspiring more clinicians to seek out medical careers in rural or regional areas.

"We have a very diverse staff however each member is expected to respectfully provide feedback to each other. Even our visiting medical students are encouraged to ask questions and challenge decisions. It keeps everyone sharp and fresh," he said.

"It's the variety of work in rural areas, myself and others, find appealing. You get to use all of your training and you are not boxed into roles or specialities."

Aside from the professional achievements, Dr Lewandowski was pleased personally that he made the decision five years ago to take a punt in the South Burnett.

"Kingaroy has been great for me and my family," Dr Lewandowski said.

"It's a great community with good people. It's also great to be a part of such a hard-working team at the hospital that is busy and productive."

Ms Rutherford, who nominated Dr Lewandowski for the award, said she was glad to see him receive wider recognition for his work.

"In the time he has been the medical superintendent of Kingaroy Hospital, RT has developed a reputation as a medical leader who achieves, and he has created an environment of supported education and training," Ms Rutherford said.

"There are so many positives to having a medical superintendent such as RT, and to hear people at a national and state level talk about his leadership and achievements at Kingaroy, is well deserved."

### ***Day in the Life – Dr RT Lewandowski explains what a 'typical' day is like for a medical superintendent in a rural hospital***

"My day starts at around 7am or 7.30am, when I do a quick round of all the departments – the ward, the ED, the labour ward – just to see how the day is panning out and to make sure all of the patients are settled and have what they need. At 8 o'clock we have a team meeting for 30 minutes to talk about our cases. And that's the end of predictability of my day! I then go where I am most needed. That could be the ED or going to see a patient on the ward or I could go deliver babies or perform endoscopies. I even could be required to go to another hospital within the South Burnett like Wondai or Nanango. My days are really random and rarely predictable. But during the day I always aim to provide guidance and back-up to the junior doctors or medical students. I also try to squeeze in time for clinical reviews and administrative duties, when I can."

**Ends**

**Caption: Dr RT Lewandowski accepts his staff award from Department of Health Director-General Michael Walsh and Darling Downs Hospital and Health Board Chair Mike Horan.**

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