NT Health Minister Dr Peter Toyne will call for a national approach to combat the shortage of rural and remote GPs the country at tomorrow’s Australia’s Health Ministers’ Conference in Adelaide.

“The Northern Territory has been the most affected by the doctor shortfall, and the effects flow through to the whole health system.” Dr Toyne said.

“People unable to find a GP end up going to our Emergency Departments which place additional strain on our hospitals.

“Lack of primary health care also means a lack of preventive medicine/chronic disease management—leading to a greater burden of ill health and seriously ill people requiring a great deal of hospital care

“The provision of GP services is fundamentally a federal issue, but the NT Government has shown its willingness to work with the Commonwealth, the profession and the community to get doctors to settle in, and stay in, the Territory.

“The Territory Government takes every opportunity to make it easier for GPs to settle here, which has included offering free consultation rooms, support for advertising and collaborative work to produce a service model where GPs can walk in and walk out of a job, rather than having to "buy" a practice.

“These models are about to be in place in both Tennant Creek and Port Keats (Wadeye).

“Just recently the Northern Territory hosted and put $10,000 towards the Royal Australian College of GP’s conference in Darwin which was used by the Department to try and recruit more doctors.

“However to tackle these problems we need national support to increase the number of doctors who are graduating from our universities, and support and encourage them to live and work outside the capital cities,” Dr Toyne said.

The Australian Health Ministers’ Conference will be held in Adelaide tomorrow (November 18).

Rural and remote GPs will be on the agenda along with a wide range of other health priorities identified by Federal, State and Territory Health Ministers.

Other items to be discussed include Childhood Obesity, the National Framework for Action to Promote Eye Health, the Australian Health Information Council and ‘From Hospital to Home: Improving Care Outcomes for Older People - under the National Action Plan’.

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