



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE LTD

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THE VOICE OF
RURAL HEALTH



Communiqué – CouncilFest 2018

The Council of the National Rural Health Alliance held its annual gathering of members, known as CouncilFest, from 9 to 11 September 2018 in Canberra. The meeting was attended by representatives of the 37 Member Bodies of the Alliance.

Activities included:

- launch of the NRHA Reconciliation Action Plan and presentation of Indigenous artwork to commemorate the RAP;
- election of co-opted members to Council;
- election of a new Board for the next two years;
- development of NRHA policy priorities;
- breakfast with the Parliamentary Friends of Rural and Remote health; and
- Council representatives meeting with some 30 Federal MPs to highlight priorities.

Detailed information about the Alliance’s Member Bodies, Council and Board can be found at www.ruralhealth.org.au

NRHA Reconciliation Action Plan

The Council approved the Alliance’s Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which was formally ratified by Reconciliation Australia prior to CouncilFest. The RAP was developed by the Alliance’s RAP Committee, chaired by Board member Geri Malone.

To recognise the RAP’s approval, the Alliance commissioned an artwork by Ngambri-Ngunnawal elder, Aunty Matilda House. The work depicts eagles as the keepers of the land, looking down on country and protecting the vital food and water resources of the land.



Aunty Matilda House presents her Reconciliation Action Plan artwork to Chair of the Alliance RAP Committee, Geri Malone

Development of Key Messages

NRHA Policy and Strategy Development Director, Jo Walker, led a discussion to identify the top three priorities to be promoted during the extensive program of engagement with Members and Senators during the annual Parliamentary visits program, which has been a component of CouncilFest for many years.

Discussion in the early planning sessions identified key priorities:

- access to health services;
- recruiting and training the rural workforce;
- sharing information and data more broadly than health networks (ie: infrastructure, technology, education);
- internet connectivity right across Australia;
- health needs to be part of broader rural infrastructure needs.

Flowing from this session, a briefing note was drafted for use in engaging with MPs in the Parliamentary Breakfast and meetings. The three themes focussed on were:

- Expand the Stronger Rural Health Strategy;
- Connectivity for All – Good for Business, Good for Community, Good for All;
- Rural Health as Regional Development.

Rural Health goes to Parliament

Tuesday 11 September 2018 was the Alliance's annual "Day in the House" which started with a breakfast with 22 Parliamentary Friends of Rural and Remote Health. Tanya Lehmann (Chair of the Alliance), Dorothy Coombe (Country Women's Association of Australia), and Stephen Gourley (Australasian College of Emergency Medicine), responded to speeches by the co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends group, Warren Entsch (Member for Leichhardt) and Warren Snowden (Member for Lingiari).

The breakfast was attended by the following Members of Parliament:

- Senator the Hon Eric Abetz (Lib) Senator for Tasmania
- Pat Dodson (ALP) Senator for Western Australia; Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Senator Rachel Siewert (Greens) Senator for Western Australia
- Senator David Fawcett (Lib) Assistant Minister for Defence, Senator for South Australia
- Senator Claire Moore (ALP) Senator for Queensland
- Cathy McGowan (Ind) Member for Indi, Victoria
- Lisa Chesters (ALP) Shadow Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Australia; Member for Bendigo, Victoria
- The Hon Julie Collins (ALP) Shadow Minister for Ageing and Mental Health, Member for Franklin, Tasmania
- The Hon Damian Drum, (NP) Member for Murray, Victoria
- The Hon Warren Entsch (LP) Member for Leichhardt, Queensland
- Dr Mike Freeland (ALP) Member for Macarthur, New South Wales
- The Hon Dr David Gillespie (NP) Member for Lyne, New South Wales
- Stephen Jones (ALP) Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government; Member for Throsby, New South Wales
- The Hon Michael McCormack (NP) Deputy Prime Minister; Minister for Infrastructure, Transport

and Regional Development; Member for Riverina, New South Wales

- Brian Mitchell (ALP) Member for Lyons, Tasmania
- The Hon Amanda Rishworth (ALP) Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development, Member for Kingston, South Australia
- The Hon Warren Snowden, Member for Lingiari, NT
- Brian Mitchell (ALP) Member for Lyons, Tasmania
- The Hon Amanda Rishworth (ALP) Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development; Member for Kingston, South Australia
- The Hon Dr John McVeigh (LP) Member for Groom, Queensland
- Joel Fitzgibbon (ALP) Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Australia; Member for Hunter, New South Wales
- Nola Marino (LP) Member for Forrest, West Australia

One of the key outcomes of the breakfast was the agreement to progress a closer relationship between the Parliamentary Friends of Rural and Remote Health and the Alliance with other activities planned to occur throughout the year. The Alliance would like to thank the Hon Warren Entsch and the Hon Warren Snowden for their warm welcome and support in organising the event.

Delegation Meetings

Following the breakfast, delegations from the Alliance met with the following Members of Parliament and staff:

- The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health; Member for Flinders (LP, Vic)
- Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie MP, Minister for Regional Services (NP, Vic)
- The Hon Warren Snowden MP, Member for Lingiari (ALP, NT)
- Mr Warren Entsch, MP, Member for Leichhardt (LP, Qld)
- Mr Tony Zappia MP, Member for Makin (ALP, SA)
- The Hon Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Education, Member for Wannon (LP, Vic)
- The Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP, Member for Hunter (ALP, NSW)
- Mr Andrew Gee MP, Member for Calare (NP, NSW)
- Senator Malarndirri McCarthy MP, (ALP, NT)
- The Hon David Gillespie MP, Member for Lyne (NP, NSW)
- Dr Mike Freeland MP, Member for Macarthur (ALP, NSW)
- Senator Chris Ketter MP, (ALP, Qld)
- Senator Pauline Hanson MP, (One Nation, Qld)
- Mr Stephen Jones MP, Member for Whitlam (ALP, NSW)
- Mr Rowan Ramsay MP, Member for Grey (LP, SA)
- Mr Brian Mitchell MP, Member for Lyons (ALP, Tas)
- Mr Mark Coulton MP, Member for Parkes (NP, NSW)



(L to R) Warren Entsch (LP, Qld), Joel Fitzgibbon (ALP, NSW), CEO Mark Diamond, Chair Tanya Lehmann, and Warren Snowden (ALP, NT) at the NRHA Friends of the Alliance Parliamentary Breakfast.

- The Hon Julie Collins MP, Member for Franklin (ALP, Tas)
- Ms Cathy McGowan MP, Member for Indi (Independent, Vic)
- Senator Slade Brockman MP, (LP, WA)
- Senator The Hon Richard Colbeck MP, (LP, Tas)
- Mr Andrew Broad MP, Member for Mallee NP, (Vic)
- Senator David Fawcett MP, (LP, SA)
- Ms Lisa Chesters MP, (ALP, Vic)
- Senator Patrick Dodson MP, (ALP, WA)
- Senator Rachel Siewert MP, (Greens, WA)
- Ms Michelle Landry MP, Member for Capricornia (LP, Qld)
- Ms Ged Kearney MP, Member for Batman (ALP, Vic)
- Mr Rick Wilson MP, Member for O'Connor (LP, WA)

The key themes of timely, affordable and appropriate access to services for rural and remote health consumers, ensuring a properly trained and available workforce, proper connectivity in rural and remote areas, the need for a Minister for Rural Health and the development of Phase 2 of the National Rural Health Strategy were key themes raised in these discussions.

The breakfast and meetings received national media coverage on the WIN regional network, Ten Network's The Project, radio 2SM network and AAP.

Governance

In a formal meeting session, the Council acknowledged the contribution of outgoing Board and Council member and former Chair, Geri Malone and congratulated the retiring Treasurer, Joe McGirr, who was on the cusp of being elected to NSW Parliament as the member for Wagga Wagga (now of course confirmed).

Council agreed to appoint three co-opted independent members: Tanya Lehmann,

Dorothy Coombe and Lynne Strathie.

At the Annual General Meeting, NRHA Board Chair Tanya Lehmann reported considerable uplift in Alliance activity over past 12 months. She highlighted increasing advocacy and recognition of need for a new rural health strategy in Australia, the appointment of Paul Worley as National Rural Health Commissioner and the appointment of Senator Bridget McKenzie, initially as Minister for Rural Health and subsequently (with similar responsibilities in a new portfolio), as Minister for Regional Services, Sport, Local Government and Decentralisation.



Senator John Williams meets with Alliance delegation (L to R) Dorothy Coombe, Geri Malone, Janine Snowie and Chris Bourke.



Minister for Regional Services, Senator Bridget McKenzie meets with Alliance Chair, Tanya Lehmann, and CEO, Mark Diamond.

The Chair congratulated Alliance staff on the quality and activity of the work undertaken and delivered. She also thanked the Board and Council members for their high-quality work throughout the past 12 months.

Of particular significance, the AGM endorsed the adoption of a new Constitution for the Alliance. This was the final step in an extensive process of consultation and member involvement over the past year. The meeting also adopted a Charter statement that encapsulates the core values and mission of the Alliance.

Council elected the following Board members:

Chair: Tanya Lehmann

Deputy Chair: Stephen Gourley

Treasurer: Julianne Bryce

Secretary: Nicole O'Reilly

Board members: Peter O'Meara, Dan Mahoney, Lynne Strathie, Lindy Swain

The Council acknowledged the hard work and commitment of the outgoing Board and thanked them for their valuable contribution.

NRHA Representatives on External Committees:

Reflecting its broad engagement with the diverse challenges of the rural and remote health sector, Council Members accepted involvement with the following committees and work groups:

- Digital Innovation Group: Katherine Burchfield
- Autism Spectre Disorder: Jo McCubbin
- Codeine Clinical Advisory Committee: Chris Moorhouse
- CHF Advisory Committee on Private Health Insurance: Chris Moorhouse/Mark Diamond
- 5th National Mental Health Plan Monitoring Committee: Lynne Strathie/Mark Diamond
- AJRH Advisory Committee: Lisa Bourke/Mark Diamond
- Council Rep on Friends Advisory Committee: Lynne Strathie
- Health Care Homes Rural and Remote Reference Group: Katherine Kirkpatrick (TBC)
- National Medical Training Advisory Network: Jenny May
- National Aged Care Alliance: Chris Moorhouse/Lynne Strathie/Mark Diamond
- National Farmers Federation Drought Committee: Dorothy Coombe
- National Rural and Remote Mental Health Alliance: Nicole O'Reilly (TBC)
- National Rural Law and Justice Board: To Be Confirmed (TBC)
- National Rural Women's Coalition: Dorothy Coombe (TBC)
- National Oral Health Alliance: (TBC) Chris Bourke (Chair)
- Pharmacy Trial Program: Lindy Swain (TBC)
- PHN Mental Health Lead Sites Project: Nicole O'Reilly (TBC)
- Queensland Rural Generalists Pathway Reference Group: Ross Hetherington (TBC)
- Rural Regional Remote Communications Commission Coalition: Dorothy Coombe/Phil Anderton (TBC)
- Social Determinants of Health Alliance: Jo Walker
- Small Rural Hospitals Working Group Independent Hospital Pricing Authority: Mark Diamond
- Stakeholder Advisory Committee to the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority: Glynda Summers
- Rural Stakeholder Roundtable: Tanya Lehmann
- Distribution Working Group: Tanya Lehmann
- Modernising Health & Aged Care Payments Services Stakeholder Advisory Committee: Mark Diamond
- National Rural Generalists Pathway Taskforce (NRGPT): Mark Diamond
- NRGPT Post Graduate Standards, Curriculum & Assessment Frameworks Working Group: Tanya Lehmann

- NRGPT Rural Consumer Expert Reference Group: Katherine Burchfield/Dawn Casey/Dorothy Coombe/Martin Lavery/Chris Moorhouse/Lynne Strathie/Sally Sullivan/Mark Diamond
- Friends of the Alliance: Chris Moorhouse

Summary of the Key Messages – Priorities for the Alliance

The following activities were supported by Council as the key priorities for the Alliance's strategic planning work going forward:

- Continue to advocate for the development of Phase 2 of the National Rural Health Strategy;
- Appointment of a dedicated portfolio and Minister for Rural Health;
- As part of the Strategy, develop and define a Service Access Standard which identifies the minimum specifications required to ensure effective access to health for people living in all rural areas; and
- Promote the need for improved telecommunications connectivity for rural and remote Australia.

Tanya Lehmann
Chair
National Rural Health Alliance

Mark Diamond
Chief Executive Officer
National Rural Health Alliance

24 September 2018