



...good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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Infrastructure investment good for rural Australia – but specific health initiatives lacking

Tonight's Budget includes welcome investment in regional infrastructure which will boost economic growth and job opportunities for rural Australia, but lacks a longer term investment plan to bridge the divide in health outcomes between the city and the bush.

"We welcome initiatives in this budget which will ease the financial pressure on people in rural Australia, such as the staged removal of the Medicare freeze, but we still need long-term reform for rural Australia," National Rural Health Alliance CEO, David Butt, said.

"We also welcome the focus on regional health through the Medical Research Future Fund – a recognition of the unique challenges in providing health care in regional and remote Australia.

"The investment in infrastructure such as the Melbourne to Brisbane inland rail link, the Snowy Hydro Scheme, and through the Regional Growth Fund will create immediate and longer term opportunities in rural areas.

"The Alliance would like to have seen additional investment in communications infrastructure, to guarantee access to high speed broadband to rural Australia as a fundamental enabler of participation in modern society, health, education, and business.

"Unfortunately rural health gets almost no attention in this budget and this is a glaring omission.

"We need that long-term commitment to a national rural and remote health plan that can identify concrete, on-the-ground building blocks, including funding models, to bridge the divide in health outcomes for people living outside the major cities of Australia."

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The National Rural Health Alliance is Australia's peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health. Its vision is good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.