



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Rural Health Commissioner Commitment Critical to Reform

The CEO of the National Rural Health Alliance, Kim Webber, today warmly welcomed the Coalition's announcement of its intention to appoint a National Rural Health Commissioner to drive the urgent work that is needed to improve rural and remote health in Australia. This announcement follows the earlier Labor Party announcement to appoint a Rural Health Commissioner to its Health Care Reform Commission.

Dr Webber said "for as long as we can remember the one third of the population who live in rural, regional and remote areas has had the highest health care needs, but also the worst access to health services. We know that difficulty accessing health services means poorer management of illness. We see the devastating results of this through increased rates of ill health, hospitalisation and premature death in our rural and remote population.

"We look forward to working constructively with a Rural Health Commissioner who will have responsibility for making recommendations to Government to improve the health outcomes of people in rural and remote Australia.

"Having this independent Commissioner role is an opportunity to better coordinate health care policy, programs and services across the Commonwealth, States, Territories, and local governments. We could finally see real, sustainable reform," Dr Webber said.

"The Alliance has been highlighting the significant effort and focus that is needed to tackle the poorer health status and the lack of access to health services of the almost 7 million people living outside the major cities in Australia.

"We also welcome the Coalition's announcement of a National Rural Generalist Pathway to support training of highly skilled rural doctors. Similar models are also needed across the rural and remote nursing and allied health workforce, and we encourage the Commissioner to consider a broad approach. Multidisciplinary health care delivery is vital to ensuring the best health outcomes for patients. There are chronic, significant shortages across almost all health professions in rural and remote Australia."

With one third of Australia's population living in rural, regional and remote areas, and with a significant health funding deficit, rural and remote health is an issue that warrants strong bipartisan support.

"The Alliance is looking forward to working with whichever party is elected to Government to improve the current state of rural and remote health in 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.*