



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

## MEDIA RELEASE

8 DECEMBER 2016

### Productivity in rural and remote human services

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has welcomed the recognition of the special challenges faced by rural and remote communities in the [Productivity Commission Report on Human Services](#).

“I am very pleased at the opportunity for public discussion on how human services, including health and hospital services, can provide better outcomes for the 7 million people living outside the major cities” said NRHA Chief Executive Officer, David Butt.

“The Productivity Commission has acknowledged that the delivery of health and human services in rural and remote Australia is more complex and difficult than in major cities. Where people in the major cities may have the choice of several providers, once you get into remote and very remote communities, choice simply may not exist,” Mr Butt said.

“The biggest barrier in attracting the range of human services into rural and remote communities is building the workforce to support those services locally.

“To do this, we need to ensure that improving health and wellbeing outcomes for the people who rely on these services is at the heart of any changes being considered. We also need flexible and responsive approaches to service delivery, workforce and education and training that are well-coordinated locally.

“Where technology can help, we must be able to access that technology reliably. Technology should be seen as an adjunct to – not a replacement for – interactions between people and face-to-face services, and certainly can help to provide some of the flexibility and support we need.

“And perhaps the most important aspect of any discussion is to look at how we fund these services – at what changes need to be made to existing funding models to promote high quality, accessible models of care.

“In rural and remote communities, it makes sense to bring together funding sources and to support long term viability of services, including long-term contracts. Conversely short term contracts impede the ability to retain existing staff, let alone to attract vital new staff.

“We look forward to the ensuing community discussion. It is possible to provide flexible, responsive human services to support vibrant rural and remote communities” Mr Butt said.

**Media Enquiries:** David Butt, Chief Executive Officer  
0411 474 912

*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.*