

Media Release

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Country kids' health is set to take centre stage in Alice Springs

The challenge of delivering timely, high quality health services in rural and remote Australia can be quite daunting. The deleterious effects of missing out are all the more serious when the patients are infants and children. In the first years of their life the base is being established for a lifelong trajectory of wellness. Health care deficits at the beginning can result in unavoidable poor health and wellbeing later on.

To consider what can be done to ensure kids in rural and remote areas are getting the best possible start in life, Children's Healthcare Australasia (CHA) and the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) are joining forces to jointly host the *Caring for Country Kids* Conference in April 2016.

"We know that the country is a great place for kids to grow up in and our two organisations want to make sure it's a healthy place too", said Gordon Gregory, CEO of the NRHA.

The *Caring for Country Kids* Conference will bring together key people to build on and grow partnerships between consumers, health professionals, hospitals and policy makers to enhance child and youth wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.

It will focus on keeping rural and remote kids healthy by placing them and their families at the centre of care. The Conference will also examine how to improve access to timely and targeted care through building the capacity of local health workforce teams. Better healthcare outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is another key focus area, along with improved care in emergency medicine, chronic conditions and mental health.

Caring for Country Kids is being held at the Alice Springs Convention Centre and will start with an opening session on Sunday, 17 April 2016. It will run for two full days on 18 and 19 April 2016, and will include an exhibition of around 25 exhibitors.

"The health and wellbeing of children and young people living in rural, regional and remote areas is a matter of great concern to us," said Barbara Vernon, CEO of Children's Healthcare Australasia (CHA).

"The *Caring for Country Kids* Conference is a great opportunity for the CHA to work with our friends at NRHA to see how we can deliver even better quality healthcare to children and young people living outside the cities".

The call for abstracts will open in August 2015 and a program will be available in December. For more details or sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities email conference@ruralhealth.org.au

#countrykids16

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For more information about the *Caring for Country Kids* Conference visit www.countrykids.org.au