

MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Services Association and Alliance Promote Community Involvement

A new agreement reached this month will improve opportunities for people in country NSW to be more closely involved in contributing to plans for their local health services.

The Health Services Association of NSW and the National Rural Health Alliance have agreed on ways to collaborate in increasing the flow of information on health matters both to and from rural communities.

Part of the new collaboration will see the eight rural Area Health Services joining *friends of the Alliance*, a network of people from rural and remote areas who help the Alliance to identify issues for policy development and lobbying work.

Paul Naylor, Executive Director of the HSA of NSW, said that development of the partnership between the two bodies would mean planning and promotional benefits for both. *Healthy Horizons 1999-2003*, which was recently launched by Federal and State Governments and the NRHA, details nationally-agreed principles and goals for improving the health of rural, regional and remote Australians. This new agreement will provide a mechanism for the advancement and adoption of those goals in the planning of rural health services.

“Country people want to be involved with their local Area Health Services. In particular they want to hear about how the planning and delivery of health services is going,” Mr Naylor said.

The Alliance’s involvement will see it providing the rural Area Health Services with information on national trends and developments in health services and programs.

“To be effective, the Alliance has to maintain contact with local communities and real issues on the ground, so that these are reflected in its policy development and advocacy work,” said Gordon Gregory, Executive Director of the Alliance.

The new agreement between the two bodies starts immediately and is another positive development for grassroots community involvement in NSW in rural and remote health.

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