



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.

## Media Release

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### **The Strategy is fine: Let the action proceed**

Health Ministers from all jurisdictions have joined together today to launch the National Strategic Framework for Rural and Remote Health. The Alliance unequivocally welcomes this new National Strategic Framework, in the hope and expectation that it will lead to stronger and more coherent national action to improve health and wellbeing in rural and remote areas.

The principles, goals and outcomes areas of the Framework generally reiterate those previously established in *Healthy Horizons*, an indication that it represents a sustained approach to acknowledged priority work areas, notably access, service delivery and workforce.

The major strengths of the new Framework are that it provides a succinct account of current health issues in rural and remote Australia and challenges the perception that success in the health care system can be assessed solely on the quality and outcomes of services in urban areas. It also accepts the need for flexibility and for a focus on local ways of addressing local problems.

The major uncertainty associated with the Framework is that its effectiveness depends very much on how it is used by eight Governments operating in very different political, fiscal and geographic environments.

The Framework emphasises consumer and community input and invites advocacy bodies, health service providers and communities to use it to identify and develop ways of addressing issues. The Alliance will respond very positively to this offer, and looks forward to working through the “collaborative partnerships and strong leadership” that are included as Outcome Areas in the Framework.

Significant progress for rural and remote health outcomes can be achieved through development and agreement of a national plan of action. This will require leadership and financial commitment at both national and State/Territory levels. Western Australia has set a benchmark with its Royalties for Regions program, through which it is investing in health-related services and infrastructure. Unfortunately not all jurisdictions currently have the political and financial means to match this approach.

With a Rural Health Plan in place, complementary to the Framework launched today, the urgency of fiscal equalisation across jurisdictions will become even more apparent, as will progress towards greater equity in the quality of health outcomes for people in major city and rural/remote areas.

#### **Contact**

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