



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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Shining the spotlight on rural and remote health

The National Rural Health Alliance has published its 2013 Election Charter to ensure a strong focus on rural and remote health in the coming federal Election campaign.

The Election Charter outlines seven domains in which both continued and new action is required in order to bring rural and remote health up to the standard commonly enjoyed in Australia's cities.

There should be a focus on local design and management of health services so that what is provided meets local needs and circumstances. An integrated rural training pathway for health professionals - as proposed in the recent report on health workforce programs - can improve the national distribution of health workers so that people in rural areas get a fair go.

The major reforms in disability and aged reform, which seem to have bipartisan support, must be implemented with the voices of rural people ringing in the managers' ears and with sufficient flexibility to fit well with rural and remote circumstances.

Governments must provide strong support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector's Close the Gap work. Smarter investment in rural schooling can play a big part in improving incomes and health literacy - thus improving the effectiveness of rural health promotion and resulting in direct health benefits.

Finally, continued strong investment in fixed and mobile telephony will be a boon to families, businesses and health services in rural and remote areas. And rural regions can also take advantage of the economic opportunities available as the result of climate change.

The Alliance will publish and regularly update an Election Scorecard on its website, rating the parties on the basis of their policies relating to the seven domains of the Election Charter.

One in three Australians live outside the major cities and there is no justification for them having lower average life expectancy than people in major cities.

Governments need to support rural and remote communities to give the people in these areas health and wellbeing that are as good as those of their city cousins. Successive Australian Governments have made great investments in rural and remote health over the past two decades and now is the time to consolidate these improvements.

The Election Charter and other details of the Alliance's pre-election activity are at www.ruralhealth.org.au

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