



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Strong Friends Committee to support work of NRHA

A new chapter for [Friends of the Alliance](#) begins this month with the appointment for two years of its next Advisory Committee.

Continuity is assured with one of those elected being Immediate Past Chair, Robyn Williams; and with Rachel Yates also winning another term. Robyn served for two years as Chair of Friends of the Alliance and is relinquishing the position to spend more time on her thesis.

Members of *Friends* in each State and Territory voted for two people to be on the Committee from each of their respective jurisdictions. The field of candidates was strong and competition for places particularly keen in several States. The result is an Advisory Committee with rich and deep experience of issues affecting the health of people in rural and remote parts of Australia.

The *Friends* network provides the means for individuals and organisations to support the Alliance's work by reporting and commenting on issues and developments relating to health and wellbeing across rural and remote Australia. Membership of *Friends* provides specific benefits for individuals, such as complimentary subscription to the Australian Journal of Rural Health and representation of their views to the Alliance Council through the Chairperson of *Friends*.

"It's great to have a new Advisory Committee with a mix of new blood and people with extensive experience of the Alliance and its culture," Geri Malone, Chair of the NRHA, said.

One of the main purposes of *Friends* of the Alliance since its inception has been strong representation of the rural health consumer's voice. This will be led in the new Advisory Committee by Debbie Elliott, Ann Lawless and Helen Murray, among others.

Debbie is Chairperson of a Community Advisory Group for health services in rural Queensland. Ann Lawless, from Wagga Wagga, represents rural health consumers on numerous local, State and national bodies, and has recently provided community feedback to the Wagga Council on disability issues. Helen Murray is a carer and consumer who is keen to align the Advisory Committee's work with the realities faced by members of *Friends* in rural, regional and remote communities.

The Friends Advisory Committee's interest in helping the Alliance to improve the status of health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will benefit from the enormous experience with Indigenous health and wellbeing of people such as Sarah Brown, Robyn Williams, Jane Greacen, Andrew Waters and Margie Fahy.

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Sarah is CEO of the Purple House - the renowned Western Desert Dialysis Unit - based in Alice Springs. Margie is NT/South Australia Manager of the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) and, among other things, is responsible for the ADF's whole of organisation Indigenous Strategy. Jane Greacen, from East Gippsland, is a rural doctor and Occupational Physician who has worked in the local Aboriginal community for nearly twenty years, and is Secretary of the Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Health in East Gippsland. The Centre works to support local Koorie kids to finish school and become health professionals. Andrew is the Director of Population Health with WA Country Health in Broome.

The new Advisory Committee includes a number of people with high level experience in rural and remote health service bodies. Kelli Sadler, a remote area nurse for ten years, is CEO of Heart Support Australia (HSA), whose members include more than 600 people in rural areas who have been diagnosed with a cardiac-related medical condition. Reducing the isolation felt by rural and regional patients is a core objective of HSA.

Chris Walpole is the sole pharmacist at Queenstown, on Tasmania's west coast. Chris provides medication reviews to all the west coast towns and helps with the training of medical students visiting those communities on clinical placements.

Martin Butler is a social worker with the Rural Social Work Action Group in Teesdale, Victoria. Elizabeth Ellis, one of the two Advisory Committee members for Western Australia, works in primary health with Telstra Health in many of the remote communities of the northern parts of that State. Felicity Croker, Senior Lecturer in the College of Medicine and Dentistry at James Cook University, has been elected to the Advisory Committee by Queensland members. She formerly held positions with Regional Development Australia (FNQ and Torres) and has been a member of a Health and Hospital Services Board.

Chris Moorhouse, one of the Tasmanian representatives, has had a lifetime's involvement with rural healthcare, particularly nursing, and has been involved with the Alliance for much of that time.

"The Alliance values the inputs of Friends of the Alliance and I am pleased to congratulate the 15 who have been elected," said Geri Malone.

The full list of members of the newly-elected Friends Advisory Committee can be seen at:

www.ruralhealth.org.au/friends/advisory-committee

One of the first jobs for the new Advisory Committee will be to elect a Chairperson, who will become a member of the Alliance Council.

To join or re-join Friends of the Alliance for 2017-18, visit www.ruralhealth.org.au/friends

Media Enquiries: Geri Malone, Chair, 0409 899 050
David Butt, Chief Executive Officer, 0411 474 912

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