

# THE NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ALLIANCE LTD



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

The Vision of the National Rural Health Alliance, as the peak non-government rural and remote health organisation, is good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.



## The Alliance

The National Rural Health Alliance is Australia's peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health. It brings together disparate voices from around Australia for the common purpose of improving the health of people who live and work in country areas.

The Alliance is currently comprised of **35 Member Bodies**, each of which is a national organisation. They represent health consumers, health care professionals, service providers, health educators, students and the Indigenous health sector.

The Alliance's broad representative base places it in a unique position to collect and disseminate information, determine key issues that affect health and wellbeing in rural and remote areas, and provide a breadth of vision on rural health matters to governments, educational and research institutions, and other professional bodies.

Among its regular contributions to rural and remote health are management of the biennial National Rural Health Conference and of the **Australian Journal of Rural Health** (AJRH). The Alliance produces a range of policy documents on various health issues, makes submissions to government, distributes media releases on topics relating to rural health and provides information by a range of other means.

The Alliance is the national management agency for the **Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme** (RAMUS) – a job it has had since the scheme's inception in the year 2000. The Alliance also manages the **NSW Regional Dentistry Scholarship** and, together with the Country Women's Association of Australia and CRANaplus, the **Rural and Remote Nursing and Midwifery Professional Development Grant**.

Fundamental to the Alliance's work is the belief that all Australians, wherever they live, should have access to comprehensive, high quality, accessible and appropriate health services, and every opportunity for equivalent health outcomes.

The Alliance takes a broad view of health and a long-term view of the development of rural and remote Australia. It supports initiatives that will contribute to the sustainability of the diverse communities of rural and remote Australia as healthy and health-promoting places in which to live and work. For these reasons it places a high value on strong partnerships among individuals, groups, organisations and all levels of governments for improved health for people in non-metropolitan areas.

Core support for the Alliance is provided by the Australian Government Department of Health. The Alliance's Member Bodies engage with its work through its **Council** – the key agency in the credibility and effectiveness of the organisation. Council is supported by **Friends of the Alliance** and a wide network of contacts and relationships.

## Rural health

In aggregate, people who live in rural areas have shorter lives and higher levels of illness and disease risk factors than those in major cities. This can be explained in part because they have poorer access to goods and services and educational and employment opportunities, as well as lower levels of income.

Australia-wide evidence shows that:

- the health of rural people is poorer than that of their city counterparts;
- accessing primary care, dental care, allied health and specialist services is more difficult and in many regions requires greater time and expense on travel and accommodation;
- shortages of health professionals, including doctors, allied health professionals, pharmacists and dentists, become more pronounced with remoteness;
- the health of Indigenous people living in rural and remote areas is significantly worse than that of their non-Indigenous counterparts;

- the viability of many rural hospitals is uncertain and there has been a serious loss of capacity for maternity services and other procedural care in rural areas;
- it is difficult to attract and retain health professionals in rural and remote areas, particularly those who study and train in metropolitan areas; and
- infrastructure in rural and remote areas for health services and health-related activity is limited and being further eroded by a lack of ongoing investment.

## NRHA Member Bodies

The Alliance will work with its Member Bodies:

- to identify priority needs in rural and remote health and promote appropriate action;
- to research key issues in rural and remote health and develop knowledge about them;
- to disseminate relevant information and knowledge to those with an interest in rural and remote health;
- to provide feedback to governments on the health impacts of their policies and services in rural, regional and remote communities;
- to encourage stronger organisations and population groups to recognise and support those which are vulnerable;
- to develop strategic alliances with other groups that have the potential to improve rural and remote health outcomes; and
- to undertake resourced project and contract work that supports its vision.

## Organisational structure

The Alliance Council is made up of one delegate from each Member Body, plus the Chair of Friends of the Alliance and up to three co-opted individuals. Council provides Member Bodies with the opportunity to engage on an equal footing in selecting the issues on which the Alliance's information and policy work focuses, in developing the organisation's views and in providing advice to the Board regarding strategic planning and project matters.

Board members are elected and appointed from within Council membership. The Board has up to ten members, normally a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, three Ordinary Members, two Moderators and the Immediate Past Chairperson. The Board is responsible for governing the affairs and property of the Alliance and for monitoring its direction and sustainability.

The Alliance has a Secretariat in Canberra.



The Alliance Council meets once a year face-to-face and every second month via teleconference.

NRHA Member Bodies	
ACEM - RRRRC	Australasian College for Emergency Medicine - Rural, Regional and Remote Committee
ACHSM	Australasian College of Health Service Management
ACM - RRAC	Australian College of Midwives Rural and Remote Advisory Committee
ACRRM	Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
AHHA	Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association
AHPARR	Allied Health Professions Australia Rural and Remote
AIDA	Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
ANMF	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (rural nursing and midwifery members)
APA (RMN)	Australian Physiotherapy Association (Rural Members Network)
APS	Australian Paediatric Society
APS (RRPIG)	Australian Psychological Society (Rural and Remote Psychology Interest Group)
ARHEN	Australian Rural Health Education Network Limited
CAA (RRG)	Council of Ambulance Authorities (Rural and Remote Group)
ACN (RN&MCI)	Australian College of Nursing (Rural Nursing and Midwifery Community of Interest)
CRANaplus	CRANaplus
CWAA	Country Women's Association of Australia
ESSA	Exercise and Sports Science Australia
FRAME	Federation of Rural Australian Medical Educators
ICPA	Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NRHSN	National Rural Health Students' Network
PA (RRSIG)	Paramedics Australasia (Rural and Remote Special Interest Group)
PSA (RSIG)	Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Rural Special Interest Group)
RACGP Rural	RACGP Rural
RDAA	Rural Doctors Association of Australia
RDN of the ADA	Rural Dentists' Network of the Australian Dental Association
RACS RSS	Royal Australasian College of Surgeons - Rural Surgery Section
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctor Service
RFW	Royal Far West
RHWA	Rural Health Workforce Australia
RIHG - CAA	Rural and Indigenous Health-Interest Group of the Chiropractors' Association of Australia
ROG of OA	Rural Optometry Group of Optometry Australia
RPA	Rural Pharmacists Australia
SARRAH	Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health
SPA - RRMCM	Speech Pathology Australia - Rural and Remote Member Community