

# INAUGURAL RURAL & REMOTE HEALTH SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM

## Media Release

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### Sharing knowledge a key to improved rural health

Delegates to the three-day inaugural Scientific Symposium in Brisbane this week agreed on the need to raise the status of rural and remote health research as a step towards improving the health of Australia's rural communities.

A key challenge is to strengthen the relationship between researchers and policy makers, and to enhance the mutual respect and contacts between them. This stronger relationship will build an understanding of the key determinants of health of the 7 million people who live in rural Australia.

Over 60 research experts from all parts of the country and overseas agreed that years of research have provided good evidence about the health status of rural communities.

Symposium Convenor, Professor Desley Hegney, from the Research and Practice Development Centre, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Queensland, said a better mechanism must be found for sharing existing knowledge to alleviate the inequalities that exist between those who live in metropolitan areas and those who do not.

"We need to identify the most important gaps in Australia's rural and remote health research effort and find ways to translate research into action – to help improve health and related infrastructure and services," Professor Hegney said.

Overseas delegates to the Symposium included Professor Ray Pong, Research Director, Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research at Laurentian University in Canada, Professor John Beard from the Centre for Urban Epidemiological Studies at the New York Academy of Medicine and Professor Jane Farmer, Chair of the Millennium Institute at the Centre for Rural Health in Inverness, Scotland.

Delegates agreed further on the need for community consultation to determine the process by which people achieve and maintain good health in rural and remote Australia.

"We need to better understand how rural and remote contexts impact on the delivery and evaluation of health care," said Professor Hegney.

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