

The importance of prevention in rural health

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Australia is internationally recognised for its success in reducing smoking across the general population and for taking on the challenges of overweight and obesity and of harmful alcohol consumption—these three issues are the priorities of the new prevention Agency.

ANPHA is drawing on new and existing data to analyse the status and trend relating to these three key issues in rural and remote communities. Although the data is not as extensive as one would wish, it is clear that outcomes for rural and remote communities are not as positive on prevention measures as those in the cities—overweight and obesity is higher, smoking is higher, and although the harmful use of alcohol is a mixed report card, there is a lot of room for improvement here as well.

Louise will discuss the overall prevention ‘picture’ in each of the areas of priority, and talk about the Agency’s work in developing new evidence and in designing and implementing health promotion strategies that recognise the strengths and needs of people who live in rural and remote communities. Peer support is a critical part of behavioural change in these areas of preventive health and some of the Agency’s innovative new approaches will be highlighted.

ANPHA recognises the strengths of rural and remote communities and the great things that can be achieved, and is exploring ways to work differently as well, rather than simply delivering ‘more of the same’ when it comes to health promotion.

