

## We know we can—because it's in our own hands

### Marie Lally<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Farmer and health consumer

Lee: The next speaker really doesn't need any introduction because she's been up here at the microphone before, but like me, she is a local. Marie Lally hails from the beautiful Clare Valley not too far north of Adelaide where some of our fine wines emanate from, but she spent a lifetime on Eyre Peninsula in drier country in the cropping country of that part of this state, and now lives at a beautiful seaside town called Tumby Bay, about half an hour north of Port Lincoln. Without any further ado, Marie Lally, please.

**Marie Lally:** Thank you, Lee. I remembered to bring him this time. Yes. I must acknowledge the Karuna people on whose land we are meeting. And I'm the PowerPoint presentation, folks. What you see is what you get. Someone asked me the other day if I had a pacemaker, and I said 'No, why? I make my own pace!' I hope you agree with me that we've had a great national Conference, and the National Rural Health Alliance team have put together this great experience for us.

You've come from all over Australia, and it's just a wonderful meeting and renewal of friends and making of new friends, and with the one thing in our hearts, and that's rural health. I'm sure you've all learned lots, as I have, and the future is in our hands. And after this wonderfully inspiring conference, I know we can do it.

I'd like to tell you just a very positive story that happened in the little community of Locke in central Eyre Peninsula where I spent a lot of my life, and the town and district population of man, woman, and child in a forty-kilometre radius is 250 people. So not a lot of us. And this little five-year-old boy was diagnosed with testicular cancer, and a rapid blood cancer, which meant his family had to go to Adelaide for him to have the chemotherapy treatment. And it also meant that his father had to give up his day job. He was an agronomist.

So the family, the community, arranged an event to help to raise funds to help this family. Everything was donated: the marquee for the dinner and the dance floor, the tables and chairs, the food, and everything, and a lot of things to be auctioned. They had fishing trips. A thousand dollars' worth of welding from the mechanic's shop, and harvester contract reaping, and a truck too, 200 tons of grain, and poor Adelaide football club gave tickets and a guernsey, and so did one of the other football clubs down here. And it was a sellout show.

And, you know, the result was \$70,000. Well, the family, they were overwhelmed and embarrassed. They said, 'We're going to have to live on champagne and caviar, you know', but they donated half of that money to the Ronald McDonald house, in which they were living here in Adelaide. So it was a good outcome for everybody. But it just does show what you can do. You don't have to have numbers, just enthusiasm. And, thankfully, the little boy is still with us, and he's improving, and things are going along good, and he's back home.

It was so good to hear Paul Rosair's Royalties for Regions Program in Western Australia—2,500 projects funded. That is truly amazing. Good health for all Australians should be the government focus. One size does not fit all in rural and remote Australia. We must have more trained staff in our centres. It's far more important than building new buildings. It's not important having a new building if you haven't got staff to run it. That's my opinion anyway. And I got a bit of a crook shoulder because I did something to it back in my farming days, and it is, you know, old age, it has come back again. So I need an x-ray. Got to wait six weeks, don't I? Because the doctor that can read the thing is not there. He comes and goes or something. So, you know, we need more staff.

Where am I now? On Doug Herd—Doug Herd's magnificent presentation on the National Disability Insurance Scheme really got me in. He was fantastic. Clinical succession planning is very important, I

feel. The future is in our hands. And how inspiring was it last night to have the young aspiring clinicians, and the older generation of health professionals all trading their ideas? That was very, very special.

The arts and health is another exciting facet of health in our country. Music and singing relieve suffering. The dance programs help suicidal mothers connect with their newborn babies. Now that was something—I had no idea that that would happen, and isn't it wonderful? It's a great therapy. You can't sing and not be happy, and that wonderful Tutti choir! I think that's a memory that we will all take home with us, I'm sure, and it will stay with us for a long time. The joy on the faces told us, told the whole story, didn't it? It was so good to see them. And the enthusiasm of people like Alison Fairleigh from Queensland, the Rural Woman of the Year. Our future in rural health in Australia is very bright. She has nearly convinced me to start Tweeting.

And then there's PaRROT, to be the national e-based learning and e-health program. It helps nurses with support and training in telemedicine and health, telehealth and teleoncology. Oh, I'll have to go home and tell my cocky all about this! We must have broadband in the bush, and no second-rate offers will be accepted. We mustn't be pushed around. We've got to push back. Keep our glass half full. We can do it, you know. It's in our hands. We have strong commitment, and we will have a brighter future.

Thank you.