



Key Themes

1. National Rural Health Strategy
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health & Wellbeing
3. Healthy Start in Life
4. Digital Health and High Speed Broadband
5. Arts in health
6. Research and Evidence Based Practice
7. Health workforce



National Rural Health Strategy

- We call on Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and all political parties for urgent non-partisan commitment to a new National Rural Health Strategy and long term funding for an associated National Implementation Plan.
- The Strategy and Plan should be finalised by June 2018 through broad consultation with the rural and remote sector, including co-design with consumers.
- The Plan should identify the concrete, on-the-ground building blocks, including funding models needed to bridge the divide in health outcomes for people living outside the major cities of Australia. This should include broadening of the Multi-purpose Services Model (MPS).
- A minimum data set of performance indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) should be developed, based on domains identified in consultation with the National Rural Health Alliance, to underpin, inform and evaluate implementation of the Plan.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing

Conference delegates stand united in our commitment to bridging the inequities in health and wellbeing of our First Peoples.

- Health professional registration and accreditation bodies must ensure that all health practitioners working in rural and remote Australia achieve and maintain competency to deliver and manage culturally safe services. Cultural safety must be embedded into all health worker training and education.
- We call on the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments to work together to integrate culturally safe eye, ear and oral health checks into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health checks, and facilitate timely treatment and management where indicated.



Healthy Start in Life

- COAG should produce a Healthy Start in Life Manifesto, inclusive of a commitment to resource high impact cross-portfolio/whole-of-government actions.
 - The manifesto should recognise the moral, social, scientific and economic case for the importance of building strong families, including pre-conception and the 1001 critical days from when a baby is conceived until age two.
 - The manifesto should target those most in need and those most at risk, with a particular focus on those who are disadvantaged in rural and remote Australia, and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Digital Health & High Speed Broadband

We recognise that broadband is a fundamental enabler of participation in modern society, health, education and business, and as such is social determinant of health.

- We call on the Commonwealth Government to introduce minimum service obligations legislation, to ensure universal access to high speed broadband and telecommunications coverage in rural and remote areas.
- We call for the development of a National Digital Health Strategy that recognises the complexities and opportunities of improving health services in rural and remote Australia. Resourcing should prioritise implementation in rural and remote areas first.
- We call for partnerships between health services, Governments and telecommunications providers to expand access to consumer-held technologies, such as point-of-care testing equipment. Partnership agreements should give priority to communities and population groups of highest need.
- Funding models must enable multi-disciplinary, multi-modal and integrated models of care that ensure local presence and coordination.



Arts in Health

We recognise that the Arts intrinsically improve health through connecting people, opening conversations and delivering physical and psychological benefits, and that a whole-of-community approach should be central to the Strategy.

- We call on State and Territory Governments to develop an Arts in Health Strategy to harness and grow the wisdom, resources and impact of the sector.
- Health organisations should collaborate with funding partners, philanthropic organisations, arts organisations and local artists to grow the Arts in Health sector, with rigorous evaluation, to build and share the evidence base.
- Governments, Philanthropic and Arts sectors should partner with (and fund) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other community artists to foster engaged cultural safety for health professionals and deliver health benefits to community.



Research & Evidence Based Practice

- We call on Governments to increase their investment in rural health research, including capability development and research translation.
- We call for the 2013 revision of the NHMRC Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Research protocols to be urgently completed, and mandated for adoption by all Health Research Ethics Committees.
- We call on Governments at all levels to increase their investment in primary prevention and early intervention, as the most cost effective means of improving health outcomes. The investment relating to rural and remote should be at least equivalent to the proportion of burden of disease.



Health Workforce

- We call on the Commonwealth Government to make a long term commitment to rural health workforce scholarships, including expansion of regionally-based training pathways.
- We call for broadening of the Rural Generalist Pathway to embrace the full rural and remote health professional workforce, including allied health professionals.
- We call on Commonwealth and state governments, health provider executives and professional bodies to actively invest in training and support for health managers who are at the front line of change and performance of health systems.
- We call on the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare to work with remote stakeholders to develop and secure funding to implement National Standards for Remote Health Worker Safety and Security