

Meaningful definition of rurality

Chair: David Perkins

Panellists: Jane Farmer, Lou Andreatta and Andrew Phillips

This panel session will explore the uses to which a definition of rurality may be put, and the desirable characteristics of such a definition if it is to help improve health outcomes.

Consistent use of the ABS' ASGC-RA classification, based on geographical remoteness by road, is expected to be an important first step towards a more uniform and transparent distribution of resources to rural and remote communities.

Additional parameters that have an important bearing on the health and wellbeing of people in those areas include:

- the population size of the place;
- the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- the socioeconomic status of people in the place and its surrounds;
- health status;
- the quality of the social and physical environment and local amenity values; and
- the number, mix and capacity of the existing health workforce in the community in question and in the broader region.

To have an agreed and meaningful definition of rurality would underpin a clearer focus and better communication on matters relating to research, policy and practice.