

Rural and remote research and the health reform agenda

The research/policy interface

This will be a highly interactive session designed to explore how research can assist the policy process in an environment of major reform. The session will be in three parts. Initially two of Australia's leading academics with extensive senior policy roles in federal and state administrations, Professors Andrew Wilson and Philip Davies, will be interviewed by David Perkins and Robert Wells about the use of research in the policy process and their perceptions of how rural health research can support the ongoing policy development in the coming period of health reform. This will be followed by a presentation by Dr Danielle Butler, the 2009 APHCRI Robert Graham Centre Visiting Fellow, about the application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a tool in providing a sound evidence base for applying policy in real settings. The third segment will be an opportunity for examination by the symposium plenary of a research agenda to support the reform process.

Some key questions that will be raised include:

- What research might be useful for informing the reform process about rural health?
- Are there particular research questions that might be addressed in areas such as workforce, community engagement, more equitably determining relative needs, and coordination of services across the primary, acute and aged care sectors?
- How will the new governance, localisation of service provision and funding approaches best be implemented in rural and remote areas?
- How can researchers and policy makers better work together to acquire a suitable evidence base in a timely and relevant way?