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HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.



...good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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New rebate will improve access to mental health services in rural and remote Australia

The introduction of a new Medicare rebate will improve access to telehealth psychological services for people living in rural and remote areas of Australia.

The new rebate, which commenced on 1 November, means that people living in remote and rural areas of Australia can claim a Medicare rebate for up to seven videoconferencing consultations with psychologists and other mental health professionals.

Mark Diamond, Interim CEO of the National Rural Health Alliance, welcomed the initiative by the Australian Government, noting that it will add to the substantial improvement in the supply of mental health services provided by the states and territories to remote areas over the past decade:

“Telehealth initiatives such as this not only reduce the need for travel, they also ensure that individuals have timely access to services when they need them most. We expect that the introduction of this rebate will improve the currently poorer mental health outcomes in rural and remote areas, such as higher rates of hospitalisation for mental health issues and self-harm.”

Across all areas of Australia one in five people experience mental illness. However, access to mental health services is far from uniform. This is reflected in the mental health workforce figures which show that in very remote areas of the country, psychiatrists are around six times less prevalent than in city areas.

Reduced access to mental health services in rural and remote areas is also reflected in Medicare data which shows that per capita MBS expenditure on mental health services in remote areas is less than a quarter of the amount spent in major cities.

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The National Rural Health Alliance is Australia's peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health. Its vision is good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.