MEDIA RELEASE

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A Rural Health Indicators Colloquium

To be effective, work to improve health status and health services needs to be informed by clear systems of measurement. A number of different approaches to such measurement will be described and discussed at a special Rural Health Indicators colloquium being held as part of the 12th National Rural Health Conference.

Kim Atkins and Linda Proietti-Wilson will report on the work they are leading for the Rural Health Standing Committee on development of key indicators to be used by the Commonwealth, States and Territories to measure progress in the five areas of the National Strategic Framework for Rural and Remote Health: access, service models, workforce, collaborative planning and governance.

Bernadette Doube and Brent Nielsen will provide a perspective from across the Tasman. They will report on research by the New Zealand Institute of Rural Health to develop a national collection of rural health indicators to monitor the health of rural New Zealanders over time and to compare the health of rural and urban dwellers. Using a case study of a small rural town that has become a popular retirement centre and has a growing, but ageing population, they will demonstrate how indicator data can be used for population based planning at a rural and regional level.

The Alere Health and Wellness Index is based on self-reported health behaviours of Australian adults. It has the capacity to drill down in considerable detail, and allows comparisons across groups and over time. Nick Williams and John Lang will explore how such data can be used in service planning and how the survey data could be used to determine what public health interventions have contributed to health changes in a particular population or area.

Margaret Rolfe will report on the Australian Regional Birthing Index (ARBI) an NHMRC-funded project based on a Canadian model. It aims to provide an index of need for maternity services in rural and remote Australia and so inform the planning of maternity services in rural and remote Australia. The methods used in the development of the ARBI could be applied to other health service areas.

The Colloquium, on Tuesday 9 April in Adelaide, will be chaired by Tricia Linehan, Director of Healthy Communities with the National Health Performance Authority.