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

NRHA welcomes greater Indigenous role in health

Labor's planned \$33 million attack on eradicating rheumatic heart disease, and its promise to give Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations a bigger role in delivering culturally appropriate primary healthcare services is welcomed by the nation's peak body for rural and remote health, the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA).

"We have long argued that delivering culturally safe services is critical to improving the health of Australia's indigenous communities," NRHA CEO Mark Diamond said.

"Giving Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations this role is significant in ensuring that.

"For example, at our recent national rural health conference we heard how Indigenous attendance at one health clinic in Newcastle jumped from 20% to 150% within two years, when the clinic was moved out of hospital outpatients to an Aboriginal community health service 3.5km away because families felt safe to go there."

"What we need now is an Indigenous workforce, trained and supported to be able to deliver the health care and health promotion services that will help drive much needed improvements in Indigenous health that Australia needs.

"We are calling for support and training for another 3000 Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal Health Practitioners to help deliver that care."

Mr Diamond welcomed Labor's promise to fund plans to reduce terrible rates of suicide among young Indigenous youth and improve mental health (\$29.6m). The Liberal Party has promised \$34.1 million.

Both major parties are also committed to eliminating rheumatic heart disease, a key part of the NRHA's 2019 election charter.

"We are pleased to see that both are committed to eradicating this highly preventable disease, which is caused by repeated exposure to bacteria. Young Indigenous Australian are 55 times more likely to die of this disease."

The NRHA represents 37 national organisations whose members work in rural, regional and remote Australia. Check the NRHA election charter at www.ruralhealth.org.au

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