

...healthy and sustainable rural, regional and remote communities.

Whole of population telehealth welcomed

30 March 2020

The National Rural Health Alliance, the peak body for rural and remote health in Australia, welcomed the Australian Government's expansion of telehealth services which starts today.

"From today, Australians will be able to access a much wider range of bulk-billed health services in their own home via telephone or video conferencing features like FaceTime or Skype," said CEO Dr Gabrielle O'Kane.

"This is vital in stopping the spread of COVID-19, because it will allow people to access important health care – whether COVID-19 related or not – without needing to leave the house and sit in a doctor's surgery.

"Telehealth is an especially important tool for health practitioners in rural Australia because patients are often so far away from the practitioner. It also helps to boost the workforce in rural areas when a practitioner can run telehealth consultations from somewhere else.

"We still want to make sure that people in rural Australia actually have access to quality broadband so that they can actually access telehealth when they need to.

"This includes improving connectivity but also making sure that services are affordable. We welcome NBN Co's announcement that they will provide extra data and unmetered services for those on the Sky Muster satellite, but still believe there is more to be done to help rural Australians."

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