



## MEDIA RELEASE

Good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.

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### Hens' teeth and rural allied health professionals

People living in rural and remote parts of Australia are still short-changed when it comes to access to allied health professionals.

As the special National Week shared by Hearing Awareness and Speech Pathology comes to an end, a hard question worth asking is whether it has improved things on either front for people in more remote areas of the country.

The number of speech pathologists and audiologists per 1,000 people falls significantly with remoteness. The proportionate number in both disciplines in the major cities is twice as high as in rural areas - and four times as high as in remote areas.

The lack of speech pathologists in rural and remote areas greatly affects the capacity for people with communication or swallowing disorders to obtain a timely diagnosis and access to appropriate treatment.

Like so much else, the prevalence of hearing loss increases with remoteness. The NRHA's Fact Sheet on the subject reports that fifteen per cent of people outside the major cities have hearing problems, compared with twelve per cent who live inside them.

Around fifty per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Northern Territory have some form of hearing loss. This badly affects their ability to succeed in education activities.

Despite these things, audiologists are also much less readily accessible in rural and remote areas.

Council of the Alliance, representing its thirty-seven members, will be in Canberra from 11– 15 September to consider answers to workforce problems such as these. It will be seeking advice from parliamentarians - Members and Senators - about how to translate an understanding of rural health challenges such as these into practicable actions.

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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.*