



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Lack of access to health services is making country people sick

At Parliament House this morning, rural and remote health advocates from across Australia called for the urgent development of a bipartisan, cross-jurisdictional National Rural Health Strategy, supported by robust health access standards, to help overcome the disparity in service access between the city and the bush.

The seven million people living in rural and remote Australia access medical services at half the rate; medical specialists at a third the rate; and mental health and allied health professionals at a quarter the rate of those in metropolitan Australia.

Speaking at the inaugural breakfast of the Parliamentary Friends of Rural and Remote Health, the newly elected Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance, Tanya Lehmann, called on political leaders to do better:

"We know that poorer access to services contributes to poorer health outcomes for rural and remote Australians. As country people we are, are on average, older, sicker and poorer than our city cousins. In a land as wealthy as ours, that is just not good enough. We have to do better."

These sentiments were echoed by Martin Laverty, CEO of Royal Flying Doctors Australia:

"Vast distances, small populations, and social factors that influence health are some of the reasons the city-bush health disparity exists. Yet these explanations don't answer why country residents and country health professionals should continue to accept massive city-bush health access differences."

The critical issue of access emerged as a key theme at a three-day gathering of Council members of the National Rural Health Alliance which concluded today in Canberra.

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