



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.



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

## MEDIA RELEASE

10 OCTOBER, 2017

### Combatting the stigma of mental illness in rural and remote Australia

Despite the fact that rates of mental illness are similar across the country, the seven million people living in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia have significantly poorer access to mental health professionals and services than those based in metropolitan areas.

In very remote areas of the country, psychiatrists are around six times less prevalent than in city areas. Mental health-related hospitalisations are more frequent in rural and remote areas and, tragically, suicide rates are up to 93% higher than in metropolitan areas.

Barriers to accessing mental health services in rural and remote areas are numerous and complex. Part of the issue relates to the availability of services – which are known to be limited. However, there are also other factors at play such as whether an individual chooses to seek help or knows how to access it.

On the occasion of World Mental Health Day, Deputy Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance, John Dennehy, says that it's pleasing to see targeted efforts towards challenging perceptions of mental illness across Australia:

“The stigma of mental health is particularly pertinent in rural and remote areas as there may be apprehension around seeking help for mental illness – particularly in smaller communities. Combatting the stigma of mental illness, combined with improved access to help from professionals, are important steps toward building resilient families and communities in rural and remote Australia.”

For more information about mental health in rural and remote Australia, please download the Alliance factsheet at <http://ruralhealth.org.au/factsheets/>

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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.*