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## Alliance seeks Budget measures to fix market failure in rural healthcare

### **\*Encouraged by recent measures that provide flexible funding for multidisciplinary team-based models**

The National Rural Health Alliance (the Alliance) awaits a Federal Budget that corrects market failure of healthcare access that is impacting rural Australian communities.

The Alliance is encouraged by the announcement of significant Strengthening Medicare measures, especially the provision of flexible funding for multidisciplinary-team-based models to improve quality of care.

“This aligns with the primary healthcare model the Alliance has been advocating – Primary care Rural Integrated Multidisciplinary Health Services (PRIM-HS),” said Alliance Chief Executive Susanne Tegen.

“We are extremely hopeful for the funding to reach the 30 per cent of Australia’s population (seven million people) who live in rural areas and contribute the majority of the nation’s income.

“Resources and rural industries supply around 80 per cent of Australia's exports, nearly 50 per cent of tourism income and more than 90 per cent of fresh food production. A majority of retail, services and manufacturing come from regional industries,” said Ms Tegen.

The Alliance believes that all Australians, wherever they live, should have access to comprehensive, high-quality, accessible and appropriate health services, as well as equitable health outcomes.

The Alliance urges the Government to announce specific measures in the upcoming 2023–24 Federal Budget to improve healthcare equity and access for Australia’s rural population.

“Rural communities are the economic powerhouse of the country. They have kept Australia out of two financial crises and lessened the negative economic impact of COVID-19 on the nation,” said Ms Tegen.

In this Budget, the Alliance seeks funding for the formalisation and implementation of the PRIM-HS model. The Alliance has been working with rural communities where the market has failed in terms of healthcare access and funding.

“There are community-based primary healthcare organisations that are at risk of closing but are shovel-ready to implement the PRIM-HS model.

“The model takes a community-led approach to ensuring multidisciplinary health care, equitable pay, career mobility and support to deliver appropriate health care that addresses regional challenges, rather than simply applying an urban model.

“It is time that rural communities receive the health services they deserve and need,” she said.

The Alliance also seeks a commitment to a National Rural Health Strategy and Implementation Plan to enable performance benchmarking.

“We recommend improved data analysis, reporting and publication of measures related to health outcomes, health services and health workforce by geographical classification, in particular reporting on health expenditure in rural Australia.

“Australians living in rural areas have shorter lives, higher levels of disease and injury and poorer access to and use of health services. The more geographically isolated they are, the greater the inequity in healthcare access they face. They are also impacted by natural disasters and turbulent global markets to a greater degree than their urban counterparts. However, they continue to make an enormous contribution to the nation’s prosperity and wellbeing.

“We want to work with governments, stakeholders and the community to look after the health and wellbeing of rural communities and thus ensure all Australians keep benefiting from the strength of their efforts.

“We trust that the Treasurer and Minister for Health and Aged Care value the contribution of rural Australia and hence, look forward to positive initiatives in the 2023–24 Federal Budget that bring healthcare access to an equitable level for all Australians,” said Ms Tegen.

\*Please see more details in the Alliance’s [2023–24 Pre-Budget Submission](#)

Ends.

**Media Enquiries:**

Susanne Tegen

Chief Executive, National Rural Health Alliance

[susanne.tegen@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:susanne.tegen@ruralhealth.org.au)

0429 100 464

Kathya de Silva

Media and Communications Officer

[kathya@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:kathya@ruralhealth.org.au)

0470 487 608