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Mental Health Week raises dire needs of rural communities

As Mental Health Week wraps up today, the National Rural Health Alliance highlights the dire need of more effective place-based approaches and coordinated efforts for mental health care services for rural, regional and remote communities.

Nearly half of Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, but not everyone in Australia has the same access to mental health care. Mental illness in rural and remote Australia appears more prevalent than in major cities as these communities are the most underserved compared to major cities. Rates of self-harm and suicide increase with remoteness, especially so in Aboriginal communities and men.

The [Mapping Mental Health Care research project](#) announced this week by Mental Health Australia and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at the University of Canberra certainly put things in perspective at a local level and demonstrates the many shortcomings of current workforce availability and service delivery. These need immediate attention.

It is eye-opening for policymakers and community of the urgent needs that must come into effect to provide the mental health services that rural populations are in dire need of now.

“It is certainly welcoming to see the launch of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022-2032 this week by the Australian Government that aims to address mental health workforce shortages in rural and remote locations and options to address the specific needs of communities to attract, retain, maximise, support and train a rural workforce,” said the Alliance Chief Executive Ms Susi Tegen.

“The Alliance is hopeful that this Strategy will pave way for better mental health care availability in the short, medium and long term, and relieve the burdens for our rural communities who have been struggling in isolation for so long with mental illness,” Ms Tegen concluded.

The Alliance has published a [help sheet](#) on rural mental health services for those needing mental health support as well as a [fact sheet](#) on mental health in rural and remote Australia.

In addition, [Issue 81](#) of our Partyline online magazine is dedicated to stories from grassroots organisations who shared their stories with us.

Lifeline [13 11 14](#) or Suicide Call Back Service [1300 659 467](#).

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