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Media Release

Rural voices heard in government's health reform review

The National Rural Health Alliance (the Alliance) is pleased to see the release of the Final Report of the Mid-Term Review of the National Health Reform Agreement Addendum 2020-2025 by the Australian government. Much of the Alliance work has been referenced and highlighted in its recommendations.

As the peak body for rural health in Australia, the Alliance advocated for rural and remote service delivery that is equitable and fit for purpose. The Alliance's proposed rural health care model - Primary care Rural Integrated Multidisciplinary Health Services (PRIM-HS), is highlighted as a case study.

The review refers to the community-developed PRIM-HS is an example of 'an evidence-based model of care that could be supported and enabled by the future National Health Reform Agreement,' adding that 'critically, it can be tailored to fit the specific health needs of rural and remote communities, using and augmenting the services and infrastructure already in existence.'

"For PRIM-HS to be considered as one of the Government's supported models of care is a fantastic outcome for rural people," said the Alliance Chief Executive Susi Tegen.

"The review shows a clear path for health reform for the next 10 years. It is bold and innovative. We're extremely pleased that our years of advocacy have come to fruition. This also sends a clear message to our rural communities that they've been heard," Ms Tegen said.

The review has acknowledged that effective urban healthcare models often do not work in rural and remote areas. It recommends a dedicated Schedule in a future Agreement between the Commonwealth and the states and territories to ensure equitable access to health care services. This includes consistent national datasets and minimum standards of access to primary, disability, aged and hospital services.

The Alliance is pleased that the review also recommends adequate funding mechanisms where market is thin or, has failed due to the maldistribution of workforce, tyranny of distance, cost of service delivery and social and economic determinants of health access.

A genuine focus on inter-sectoral and community collaboration and clear commitment to Closing the Gap for Indigenous communities has also been advocated for by the Alliance.

"This is a considerable achievement for the Alliance's 50 member organisations which work across the patient and clinician life journey. We look forward to the immediate implementation of these recommendations, to ensure that rural people finally have a path towards health care access equity with urban Australia. We will continue our commitment to the 7 million rural population to ensure that they receive the health care they deserve, and clinicians receive the change they require to sustainably deliver services," Ms Tegen said.

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