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Rural health workforce – the real story!

Over the next 5 weeks the National Rural Health Alliance will be releasing series of health workforce fact sheets that show the number of health professionals working in rural, regional and remote areas per capita compared to major cities. The fact sheets confirm the significant mal-distribution of the health workforce across Australia, with remote and very remote areas experiencing the lowest workforce supply ratios compared to major cities.

The professions with the highest number of allied health practitioners are psychologists, physiotherapists, pharmacists and social workers across all areas in Australia. However these professions are still under-represented in rural, regional and remote areas, when compared to needs of the population.

“The fact sheets unfortunately do not tell us anything new, in that we know there is a mal-distribution of the workforce and we’ve known this for decades now,” said Gabrielle O’Kane, NRHA Chief Executive Officer.

“But what they do tell us is there’s an ongoing trend and show us where the persisting gaps are. For example, we need more of everyone, but particularly optometrists, podiatrists and chiropractors.

“We know that improving access to a highly skilled and well distributed workforce will contribute greatly to the health and wellbeing of people living in these areas. We need an urgent boost to create and sustain health jobs in the bush.

“Some solutions we know that work are about providing quality training and clinical placements in rural places to create that pipeline, and supporting rural kids to access that training locally. But the jobs need to be there too.”

“Health and social care jobs are jobs of the future. We need government policies that will boost the rural workforce now and into the future to meet this demand,” said Gabrielle O’Kane
The workforce facts sheets will provide the facts and figures and each one will be accompanied by a personal story. The factsheets and personal stories will be published over the coming weeks to provide a personal understanding of what it means to be a health professional in a rural, regional or remote area in Australia.

“We know that it is likely that the stories will resonate with many health professionals working in rural and remote areas. But we also hope these stories will promote the benefits of going rural and highlight the deep sense of achievement gained, the adventures that are part of a rural or remote lifestyle and the wonderful community spirit that make working in the bush very satisfying,” said Gabrielle O’Kane.

**Workforce factsheets**
Week 1: **Allied Health Factsheet**

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