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Data snapshot & workforce mapping tool answer crucial questions on state of rural health in Australia

The National Rural Health Alliance (the Alliance) has launched two evidence-based resources that support and drive rural health reform by answering crucial questions raised by policymakers and rural health stakeholders.

The first resource, the *Rural Health in Australia Snapshot 2021* ([the Snapshot](#)), is a concise overview of the rural health system and the health status of people living outside major cities; and the second, the *Rural Health Workforce Mapping Tool* (RHWMT), can precisely pinpoint workforce disparities in every pocket of rural, regional and remote Australia.

The Alliance's CEO, Dr Gabrielle O'Kane, says, "We are leading this project to make the most powerful use of data that we can access to build on our strong advocacy work on behalf of rural, regional and remote communities".

The Snapshot explains aspects of health system funding mechanisms and the connections between primary, secondary and tertiary health care. It also collates a range of health markers, including social determinants of health and burden of disease measures, demographic analysis, and personal risk factors and life expectancy.

"This is a comprehensive evidence-based resource, which we've been able to compress into a digestible format that is easily accessible for a whole range of policymakers and other stakeholders engaged in rural health."

The Snapshot complements the Alliance's second new resource which is a [geospatial mapping tool](#) that reveals rural health workforce disparities in various disciplines and locations, as well as local health outcomes.

"The RHWMT uses regional centre data as a benchmark to compare how the workforce is distributed across rural and remote areas through the lens of three filters: Commonwealth Electorate Divisions, Local Government Areas and the Department of Health's Modified Monash Model.

"These 'heat maps' allow users, such as politicians, policymakers, health services and community planners, to develop a greater understanding of local health issues. They show where the health workforce is most in need, including the professions that may be in local shortage."

Media enquiries: Clare Ross, Manager Media and Communications, 0437 445 201
clare.r@ruralhealth.org.au