



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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The Leaders know the importance of rural and remote health

In Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott, the Election campaign has two people with close and long-term understanding of the importance of rural health and health policy.

The NRHA has today published its Election Charter calling on Leaders to commit to 10 key fields of action to overcome the inequities faced by the people of rural and remote Australia. Action across these 10 key fields will not only improve health outcomes but also contribute to the nation's economic productivity.

The NRHA's Election Charter offers the Parties an affordable, coherent way forward to improve health and community vitality for people in rural and remote areas. Dr Jenny May, Chairperson of the Alliance, will provide the public and the media with weekly updates on commitments in these 10 areas.

"We'll be asking the Leaders to commit to a range of action to improve the lot of the families, communities and industries of rural, regional and remote areas," Dr May said.

Progress can be made through redoubled commitments to health reforms that are already in train. These include improving local access to primary care, a fair share of the extra resources for hospitals, and strengthening and expanding our rural health workforce.

A key medium-term solution to health and workforce issues is regional development.

"We've been encouraged by recent references to how policies relating to population, immigration, resource rent taxation and remote zone allowances can differentiate between particular regions. If you add them all together you're not far from a regional development policy. Investing in healthy people through investing in our health services builds healthy communities at the heart of our nation," Dr May said.

Two other national issues with particular implications for rural people are yet to be dealt with adequately by either the Labor Party or the Coalition. These are the parlous state of mental health and dental health. We need significantly greater national attention in these areas and specific approaches to target the major shortfalls in rural and remote areas.

Further Contacts

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Election Charter at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/election2010>