



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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Ministerial focus: an important strategic step for rural health

The appointment for the first time of a Minister for Indigenous, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Service Delivery is an important strategic recognition of the special needs and circumstances facing people in Australia's rural and remote communities. People in the bush will expect this position to be part of a permanent increase in the Government's commitment to rural communities.

In welcoming Minister Warren Snowdon to the new position, Dr Jenny May, Chairperson of the NRHA, said the appointment will be important both for substantive policy reasons and to boost the place of rural issues on the political agenda.

"Families and businesses in rural and remote Australia face particular uncertainties in the light of the financial downturn, exacerbated by the impacts of climate change and ongoing difficulties in accessing services," Dr May said.

"It's a time of change and opportunity in rural and remote Australia, and having a Minister with special responsibility for some of the critical issues will help ensure beneficial outcomes. The immediate challenges include meeting COAG's targets for Indigenous health and education, ensuring the strategic health reforms in train benefit country people and those in small communities, and making sure that people in smaller and more remote communities are included in plans for better broadband access," she said.

"There is also the issue of how Indigenous people on outstations, and people in remote areas everywhere, are included in the service and economic mainstream Australian life."

"The recent National Rural Health Conference in Cairns showed again that rural and remote areas should be seen as the best bets for investment in innovative health services - just as long as they are not short-term trials without any long-term future."

It was agreed at the Cairns Conference that there should be a single national health system, delivered at a regional level and with stronger community engagement than currently exists. The system should provide health service funding for all regions based on health need and remoteness.

"Health Minister Nicola Roxon demonstrated again at the conference her understanding of rural and remote health needs and the Government's continued commitment," Dr May said. "People will be pleased to know that Minister Roxon has the targeted support of Warren Snowdon in the new Ministerial position. The Alliance looks forward to working closely with both of them, the new Parliamentary Secretary and the Department in the interests of better health for country people."

Further Contact

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