



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.

## Media Release

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### **Patients' assisted travel must have Commonwealth support**

The Commonwealth Government's 'hands-off' response to the Senate's Inquiry into patient assisted travel schemes will bitterly disappoint people in rural and remote areas.

Dr Jenny May, Chairperson of the Alliance, said that having the Commonwealth 'committed to working with state and territory governments to improve the system' but not leading or investing is a serious setback.

"We understand that the Commonwealth does not welcome financial exposure to these schemes, but we are convinced that it needs to lead. The best way of doing this effectively would be to provide incentive payments to the states and the Northern Territory," Dr May said.

"Having waited so long for this response to the Senate Report<sup>1</sup>, it gives us little confidence to know that the Commonwealth is still considering the issues through its various reform and collaborative processes. But we live in hope," she said.

The formal response to the report, published today, lists the many programs funded since the election of the Rudd Government and the reviews undertaken, but makes no substantive response to the specific recommendations from the Senate nor indeed to the clear proposal from the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission that PATS should be better funded.

The Senate's recommendations were referred to a task force established in March 2008 to consider the issue. But all that today's response reveals is that the Commonwealth is continuing to participate with the states and territories to progress the work.

"Having drawn a blank today, people in rural and remote areas will hope that something as important as patient assisted travel can be specifically dealt with in the upcoming health reform announcements," Dr May said.

#### **Further Contacts**

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<sup>1</sup> The Report was tabled on 20 September 2007.