

## Media Release

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### Regional engagement: a key to rural health

Speakers and delegates at the 10<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference in Cairns have made a strong case for funding for health services to be held and managed at the regional level.

Chair of the National Rural Health Alliance, Dr Jenny May, said that the view of Conference delegates is that the time is right for major change in the governance arrangements for Australia's health system.

"The release of the report from the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission will be the catalyst for this change," Dr May said.

"There is not yet unanimous agreement about which of the Commission's three options will be best. But there is agreement that genuine regional consultation and management of health services will make us better off," she said.

"We want equal health for rural and remote people – and we believe regionalisation will be the best way to deliver funding equivalence for our regions, weighted by health need."

"A single national system with regional governance can lead to health and related services being delivered in an integrated manner," Dr May said.

Fred Chaney, Chair of Desert Knowledge Australia and Leader of the Remote Focus Group, chaired a robust session on the national implications of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. "It was agreed that the Government should deliver on its promise to restore the Racial Discrimination Act," Mr Chaney said.

"The fact that there has been that sort of intervention for health and safety in the Northern Territory suggests that our remote areas are almost a 'failed state'," Mr Chaney said.

"But commitment by government to empower regions in health services, based on communities of interest, will certainly improve the situation for people in those areas," he said.

#### Further Contact

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