



NATIONAL RURAL
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ALLIANCE INC.

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30 April 2010

Professor Warwick Anderson
CEO, National Health and Medical Research Council
GPO Box 1421
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Professor Anderson

Partnerships for Better Health Centres of Research Excellence – an opportunity to strength rural and remote health outcomes through research

I am writing on behalf of the National Rural Health Alliance to express interest in the implementation plan for the Partnerships for Better Health Centres of Research Excellence initiative (*NHMRC Tracker*, 16 April 2010) and to indicate our enthusiasm for participating in the consultation process. As the peak body for rural and remote health, the Alliance would also like to express interest in being a policy partner in the development of a centre for research excellence in rural and remote health.

The current health reform environment and the health challenges facing our ageing population over the next ten years provide an excellent opportunity to enhance the role of applied health research as the driving force for change in policy and practice.

Nowhere is the need for health improvement higher than in many rural and remote communities where health indicators are poorer, health outcomes are worse and workforce shortages are more desperate than in the major cities. Indeed the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission recommended building health service, clinical and workforce capability through a remote and rural health research program.

The four objectives proposed for the NHMRC Partnership Centres for Excellence in Research initiative seem particularly relevant to rural and remote health research:

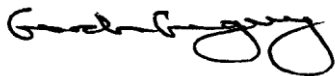
1. To support implementation of research-informed changes in health and health care systems.
2. To do synthesis and dissemination of research relevant to improving health care system performance.
3. To undertake collaborative research on topics and using methods that advance broadly defined health care and/or cross-sectorally determined health.
4. To build capacity with the research community to do applied research and within the system to use research as part of change management.

Rural and remote researchers are uniquely well-placed for collaborative and innovative approaches to applied health research through the multidisciplinary strengths of the University Departments of Rural Health and the network of Rural Clinical Schools. The rural and remote communities they serve provide opportunities for innovative partnerships with a range of industries as well as with health service providers and rural people. Those communities provide a microcosm for many of the key challenges in health change management we face today. These include clinical and lifestyle behaviour change, changes in the way we employ our health workforce, changed settings and places for health care delivery, and innovation and improvement in the processes that underpin safety and quality and health system performance.

As you know, the Second National Rural Health Scientific Symposium is coming up on 9-11 June 2010 and we are delighted that the NHMRC will be represented. The purpose of the Symposium is to bring together key rural, remote and Indigenous health researchers to review leading Australian and international rural health research with a particular focus on its substance, the science and methodology that underpins it and the most effective means of ensuring its adoption into policy and practice.

We look forward to working with you on the arrangements for establishing the Partnership for Better Health Centres for Research Excellence initiative and ensuring the full involvement of rural and remote researchers and other stakeholders in health in the consultative process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Gregory', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gordon Gregory
Executive Director