



NATIONAL RURAL
HEALTH
ALLIANCE INC.

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From the 9th Conference: plans for rural and remote health

The National Rural Health Alliance has today published on its website the full set of 250 recommendations from delegates at the 9th National Rural Health Conference held last week in Albury. The full set of recommendations provides a valuable snapshot of people's thinking on rural and remote health at the beginning of this important year. It is clear that there are a number of successful local programs that should be replicated more widely, some good ideas about how health workforce challenges can be overcome, and quite a number of specific research proposals relating to rural and remote health. At the same time, the recommendations make clear the anxiety of the sector about boundary issues between jurisdictions, professions and practice modes, and about how health reform at local, state and national levels could improve outcomes for patients.

The recommendations came from four sources: from the authors of the papers presented at the Conference in concurrent sessions, from Keynote addresses, from the opinions expressed in concurrent sessions and from groups of concerned individuals.

The full set has been edited by the NRHA for some consistency of style and format, while retaining, in good faith, the intentions of the recommendations' proposers. This means that the full set contains some individual proposals which may not be consistent with each other. The recommendations process, in which all Conference delegates took part, resulted in eighteen priority proposals which were evaluated and approved by Conference delegates on the final day. These will now be promoted by the NRHA and other interested parties as key changes which will improve the evidence base, health outcomes and health services in the bush.

As for the full set of 250, they provide qualitative evidence about issues of concern and fertile ground for researchers and would-be researchers to till over. The Alliance intends to build an omnibus rural and remote health research agenda from proposals at the Conference, and include it in the organisation's ongoing advocacy for a greater focus on rural and remote issues in the national health research agenda.

Whereas the Alliance has a clear and important mandate to promote the eighteen priority recommendations on behalf of the sector, it has to check others among the 250 with its 27 Member Bodies before it has a formal position on them.

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