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# Healthy ageing and aged care in rural and remote Australia

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COTA National Policy  
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...good health and  
wellbeing in rural,  
regional and remote  
Australia



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# National Rural Health Alliance

Members are 31 national organisations:

- rural, regional and remote health professionals, researchers, service providers, students, managers, Indigenous groups, consumers;
- united in the belief that all Australians, wherever they live, should have access to comprehensive, high quality, accessible and appropriate health and aged care services, and the opportunity for equivalent health outcomes.



# Key issues

- distances and costs
- ageing population
- worse health outcomes
- higher risks for and rates of certain chronic conditions
- ageing health workforce
- health professional shortages



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# Rural aged care reform needs, issues

- choice of (*viable*) aged care services
  - higher costs for freight, staff attraction and retention
  - lower volumes mean fewer economies of scale
- access
  - no doctor = no Medicare – with a shift to acute care
  - balancing health promotion, care for chronic conditions
- affordability
  - 45% card holders compared with 30% in cities



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# NRHA response to the Productivity Commission Inquiry *Caring for older Australians*

“Indigenous Australians and those living in rural and remote areas or on low incomes should achieve health - **and ageing** - outcomes comparable to the broader population.”



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## Improving system navigation

- Aged care interests should be represented on Medicare Locals, which are being established to lead population health planning at a regional level
- Medicare Locals should support the establishment of and work with the Gateway for their region
- Rural communities are well placed to build on these major new opportunities to coordinate primary, acute and aged care services



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# Choice and quality of care for rural people in their own communities

- Continue to support and develop flexible aged care funding arrangements including:
  - Multi-Purpose Services program
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care program
- Further support for flexible respite care services in rural and remote communities; and
- Appropriate training, support, advice for carers.



# Build local capacity

- targeted support to remote and Indigenous aged care services and staff to meet safety and quality standards
- building local and organisational capacity underpins continuous quality improvement as aged care evolves



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# Strengthen rural & remote workforce

- special remote area program to encourage and support people and organisations in training and career enhancement for local people in aged care
- parity in remuneration across aged and acute care, coupled with measures to support living conditions, employment opportunities and career pathways comparable with Major Cities



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# Paying for and financing rural and remote aged care

- improved reporting by remoteness classification (ASGC-RA)
- realistic viability supplements part of independent, transparent pricing proposal
- “catch-up investment” to meet national targets in uptake and delivery of services, expand and upgrade rural facilities



# Sustainable communities care for older people

- jobs and business
- education, career
- housing and infrastructure
- retain more older people for longer, in better health

[www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

