



Australian Government
National Rural Health Commissioner

Hon Dr David Gillespie MP
Minister for Regional Health
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

National Rural Health Commissioner Statement of Intent

I am pleased to provide you with the National Rural Health Commissioner's Statement of Intent as requested in the Statement of Expectations issued 23 March 2021, by the former Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government Hon Mark Coulton MP.

This Statement of Intent outlines my approach to achieving the goals and obligations referred to in the Statement of Expectations. It sets out the priorities for the National Rural Health Commissioner, including the importance of strong and cooperative stakeholder relationships and a commitment to sound organisational governance and financial management.

I look forward to continuing our collaborative and productive working relationship.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ruth Stewart'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'R' and 'S'.

Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart
National Rural Health Commissioner

5 July 2021

Encl (1)



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Statement of Intent

This Statement of Intent responds to the Statement of Expectations issued to the National Rural Health Commissioner (the Commissioner) by the former Minister for Regional Health, the Hon Mark Coulton MP, 23 March 2021. It is a formal commitment from the Commissioner to meet the expectations of the Minister.

Legislative Framework and Reporting

The National Rural Health Commissioner holds a statutory appointment under Part VA, of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*.

As part of the legislative requirements under 79AP of the Act, the Commissioner will, by the 15th day of October each year, prepare and give to the Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report on the Commissioner's activities during the previous reporting period, which also includes any other matters that the Minister directs to be included in the report.

Priorities for the National Rural Health Commissioner

In performing the legislative functions identified above, the Commissioner will address the priorities outlined in the Minister's Statement of Expectations.

The Commissioner will provide to the Minister a rolling work program focussing on practical outcomes. The work program will describe how the Commissioner and two appointed Deputy Commissioners plan to act upon the following priorities:

- Provision of support for the Government's response to urgent and emerging priorities; for example considering the COVID-19 pandemic on rural workforce and convening the Rural GP Respiratory Clinic National Leaders Network.
- Support for the development, implementation and evaluation of innovative models of care in regional, rural and remote Australia, including but not limited to the continued work of the Office with the Department on Primary Care Rural Innovative Multidisciplinary Models (PRIMM) Grant Opportunity to support rural communities to design tailored models to address ongoing health delivery challenge.
- A national leadership role on rural workforce, training and primary care reform, including work in the following areas:
 - The Commissioner will continue to progress the implementation of the *National Rural Generalist Pathway* (NRGP) including the development and implementation of a strategic governance framework with the formation of the NRGP Strategic Council and will continue to lead the work seeking recognition by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Authority and



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the Medical Board of Australia of Rural Generalist Medicine as a specialised field of General Practice. This work will be in collaboration with the two General Practice Colleges (the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine).

- The Commissioner will continue to co-chair, with the Deputy Chief Medical Officer Professor Michael Kidd, the Transition to College-Led Training Advisory Committee (TCLTAC). This committee provides advice to the Australian Government on the development and implementation of reforms to the delivery of general practice training as part of the transition to a College-led training model.
- The Commissioner will provide rural representation and advice to ensure that the National Medical Workforce Strategy is designed to improve health workforce distribution, rural health training outcomes and to improve health outcomes for rural communities.
- The Commissioner will advise on strategic opportunities to promote and support rural multidisciplinary workforce and training reform, including Primary Care reforms, such as rural reform advice on the 10 Year Primary Care Plan, the Remote Vocational Training Scheme trials in the Murrumbidgee and consideration of recommendations in the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program evaluation, as practical ways to build the rural training pipeline and to progress allied health reform.
- The Commissioner will work closely with the Department and key stakeholders to explore and progress the recommendations of the *Improving Access, Quality and Distribution of Allied Health Services* report establishing links with other departmental health and workforce reforms including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan, including working with the unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforces: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, Practitioners and Mental Health Workers.

Stakeholder Relationships

The Commissioner will work closely with a variety of stakeholders to fulfil the priorities outlined, including but not limited to: rural, regional and remote communities; the health sector; professional peak bodies; universities; specialist training colleges; the Department; and state and territory governments.

The Commissioner will form relevant stakeholder reference groups to progress the priorities including a rural health consumer reference group to support and inform the work of the Office. The Commissioner will continue to engage closely with members



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of the Rural Health Stakeholder Roundtable (the Roundtable) and continue membership of the Distribution Advisory Group (DAG).

To support frequent and effective stakeholder engagement the Commissioner will establish and chair the Advisory Network of the National Rural Health Commissioner (ANNRHC). This group will assist the Commissioner in formulating advice to the Minister regarding policy and strategies to improve the health of rural and remote communities.

Additionally, the Commissioner and Deputies will engage with state and territory governments, relevant University Departments, Australian Medical Association and health consumer groups and the Australian Government Department of Health.

Organisational Governance and Financial Management

The Commissioner will ensure that the affairs of the Office are managed in a way that meets the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, and the financial management and operational policies of the Department, including the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct.

In particular, the Commissioner is committed to an efficient use of resources, and will continue to exercise prudent management in respect of the Office in a way that minimises impost while ensuring that rural stakeholders continue to be able to participate and engage with the work.