

16 September 2025

**The Hon Mark Butler MP**

Minister for Health and Ageing  
Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Butler,

**RE: SECURING THE FUTURE OF A COLLECTIVE RESPONSE TO RURAL HEALTH CHALLENGES – A CALL FOR LONG-TERM INDEXED FUNDING**

On behalf of the [55 member organisations](#) of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA), we write to highlight the trusted value we bring to government, the health system, and most importantly, to the over 7.3 million Australians who live in rural, regional and remote communities.

For 33 years, the NRHA has been a **collaborative, evidence-based and independent voice** that supports government's ability to respond effectively to rural populations which make up 30% of Australians and their health needs.

During the NRHA Council meeting on 25 August 2025, the Council unanimously resolved to request long-term, indexed funding for the Alliance to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of its work for rural, remote, and regional Australians.

We have delivered this by:

- **Prevention & Awareness** – providing and facilitating expertise in public health and government service promotion and early intervention programs designed for rural contexts.
- **Positive Policy Development** – generating rigorous, evidence-driven proposals that help shape practical, cost-effective and fit-for-purpose health solutions. e.g. Scope of Practice and Working Better for Medicare Reviews, Review of Primary Health Network Business Model and Mental Health Flexible Funding Model; Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority (IHACPA) Pricing Frameworks for Australian Public Hospital Services; Australian Residential Aged Care Services; and Australian Support at Home Care Services 2026-27, Accreditation of General Practices Consultation; Districts of Workforce Shortage (DWS), Ahpra Consultation on the Review of Supervised Practice Framework, and input to the draft Nursing and Allied Health workforce strategies and the Medical Workforce Advisory Collaboration to name a few.
- **Trusted Conduit** – connecting government with communities, clinicians and clinics and facilitating two-way interaction with the rural health sector, including clinicians, educators, and researchers, to ensure policy is informed by those on the ground.
- **National Collaboration** – uniting 55 peak bodies and others across the health spectrum into a single, consistent and coordinated voice, reducing fragmentation in policy submissions and amplifying solutions via credible data and examples.

The NRHA is uniquely placed to:

- Leverage the expertise of its **55 diverse members**, spanning clinical, community, consumer, educator, academic and service delivery sectors to **inform future-focused health reforms**, e.g. the government's implementation of scope of practice review, primary care and workforce reviews, and Strengthening Medicare reviews.
- Deliver **independent, trusted advice** that reduces duplication of effort, integrates the evidence base, and strengthens government decision-making.
- Act as a **cost-effective national conduit** between the Commonwealth, state governments, and geographically diverse communities with complex health needs, ensuring engagement that is both authentic and efficient.
- Maintain a **long-standing reputation for reliability** as a partner in prevention, awareness, research translation and workforce solutions, including promoting better access to high quality, affordable and integrated health care.
- Support an **increase in digital health literacy** and **uptake of government programs** to improve health equity.
- Support the **government's commitment to integrate health, disability and aged care policy** and initiatives as the remit of the NRHA and our broad membership and friends and allies base already spans the rural reach in these sectors.
- Unite us as Members to work towards **collective action** to support rural communities in a way that no other organisation is able to do.

Rural Australians face systemic and structural challenges: higher rates of chronic disease, reduced access to clinicians, socio-economic disadvantage, lower life expectancy, and significant cost-of-living and digital access barriers. Many of the government reforms and reviews will allow for some of these challenges to be addressed.

However, these inequities cannot be eased through short-term funding and projects alone, but with sustainable and tailored reform in areas of need, including rural and remote Australia.

We therefore call on the government to:

- **Commit to long-term 5-to-10-year indexed funding** for the NRHA, ensuring continuity of the organisation's role as the government's trusted partner in rural health and our ability to contribute to this role as active Members of the NRHA.
- Recognise the **NRHA as an essential collaborator and conduit** for delivering health equity across rural, regional and remote Australia **as a priority**, when many rural entities and communities feel underserved, affected by climate disasters and underappreciated.
- Invest in enhanced prevention and policy capacity that drives intergenerational reform, benefiting the whole nation by ensuring rural Australians can thrive.

Minister, rural and remote Australians are resilient and productive, contributing enormously to the nation's prosperity through primary industries, agriculture, mining, energy, tourism and cultural heritage. Yet they remain sicker, older, and poorer than urban Australians — not because of who they are, but because of systemic and enduring underinvestment.

By securing long-term funding, the NRHA can continue to help the government bridge this gap, delivering healthier, fairer, and more productive futures for all Australians.

We urge you to act now to guarantee sustainable funding for the NRHA, so that together we can deliver health equity to one-third of our nation and improve both social justice and economic prosperity for Australia.

Yours sincerely,



**Susi Tegen**  
**Chief Executive**

On behalf of the Members of the National Rural Health Alliance