

## Preventive Health and Primary Health Care

Welcome to the third Rural and Remote Health Special Interest Group e-newsletter!

We publish quarterly newsletters covering important topics impacting people living in rural and remote areas. This issue focuses on *Preventive Health and Primary Health Care*.

The previous issue can be accessed [here](#).

### Preventive Health and Primary Health Care

Preventative health and strong primary health care are central to an efficient, equitable and effective health system.

The Australian Government has committed to develop and implement a [10 Year Primary Care Plan](#), setting a vision and path to guide future primary health care reform.

The Australian Government has also committed to develop a [National Preventive Strategy](#) which aims to help all Australians improve their health at all stages of life through early intervention, better information, and targeting the modifiable risk factors and the broader causes of poor health.

CHF recently asked rural and remote consumers for feedback to inform contributions to this reform process.



**Preventive Health**

Consumers were asked about the key risk factors that contribute to poor health in rural and remote areas, the barriers to improving health outcomes and actions they would like to see from governments to keep people healthy and prevent illness.

Lack of knowledge and low levels of health literacy were one factor identified alongside a culture of not seeking help, particularly amongst men. Mental health, addiction and suicide are all issues that result from this.



A key barrier to improving health outcomes is the lack of resources invested into rural and remote health services, which can lead to lack of access to preventive health care for consumers. Lack of investment in public dental services was one area repeatedly raised as needing attention.

Day to day costs, particularly those associated with purchasing fresh food, accessing exercise facilities and transport are all barriers which are more expensive in rural and remote communities.

Geographic isolation and social isolation also make it hard to participate in activities that will improve health outcomes.

Examples of the types of actions that consumers would like to see include:

- Better access to public dental services
- Subsidies for healthy food and drink

- Funding for public transport to facilitate access to health care and community activities
- Incentive to keep health professionals in rural areas.

### Primary Health Care

For primary health care, access to specialists was a common need, with many needing to travel long distances to get specialist care. The availability of allied health services varied considerably between communities and mental health was identified as a particular area of need, as were local birthing services.

Most consumers were willing to engage with care by distance using online and telephone communication, though face-to-face remains the preferred options where possible.



Consumers want more access to visiting specialist clinics, and greater investment in rural generalist pathways so that GPs, nurse practitioners and Aboriginal health workers are valued for their skills and supported to provide a greater range of services.

Consumers understand the difficulty of providing health services in small communities and are open to a range of different models (telehealth, rural generalists, visiting specialists, rural incentives for health workers etc.) to support the provision of better access and high-quality healthcare.

### Did you know...

...31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) have been established around Australia...with over half covering primarily rural and remote areas...

...In their local region, PHNs aim to increase efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes...

...and improve coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care at the right time.

The seven key priority areas are...

1. Mental health
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
3. Population health
4. Health workforce
5. Digital health
6. Aged care
7. Alcohol and other drugs

Do you know your PHN?

How is your PHN helping in your community?

Learn more about the PHN in your area [here](#).

### Consultations and Surveys

#### Australia's Health Panel

Australia's Health Panel is a CHF initiative that helps the consumer voice be heard on the national stage, through timely and high-quality surveys. It is a modern, interactive online platform devoted to harnessing the views of Australians about the state of the nation's health care system.

Each month, a short survey will be sent to Australia's Health Panel, that can be filled in online. Our latest survey highlights what consumers had to say about the impact of climate change on health. You can read the results [here](#).

[Click here](#) to find out more information or to register.



### Events and Campaigns

#### Rural Innovations Changing Healthcare 2020

Announced by the Agency for Clinical Innovation Rural Health Network, this state-wide forum is virtual in design, linking rural clinicians and consumers via a blend of videoconference, live web streaming and social media. The day showcases the strength of rural communities

implementing strategies to improve mental, physical and social wellbeing, where incidental health benefits quietly creep up on you!

**Theme:** Health by Stealth: Rural Communities Leading by Example

**Cost:** Free

**Registrations open:** 4 February

**Date:** 25 March 2020

**Time:** 9am to 3:30pm [AEDT]

**Venue:** This is a conference without travel, accommodation or registration fees.

To find out more information or to register, [click here](#).



### 7<sup>th</sup> Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium: Shaping the Future

**About:** It will bring together the rural and remote health sector with policy makers and others in the government and the non-government sectors to shape the future of rural and remote health research.

**Date:** 25-26 May 2020

**Location:** Alice Springs Convention Centre, NT

[Click here](#) for more information or to register.



### Better Care, Everywhere: Healthcare variation in practice

Hosted by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, and led by high profile national and international speakers, this is the one health event you can't afford to miss in 2020.

The first national event dedicated to reducing healthcare variation across Australia.

**Date:** 20-21 July 2020

**Where:** International Convention Centre, Sydney

To find out more, or to register [click here](#).



### CHF Summit 2020: Shifting Gears – Save the Date

CHF will be hosting the inaugural Australian and New Zealand Consumer Experience and Leadership in Healthcare Summit on **2-3 September 2020** at the **International Convention Centre in Sydney**.

The Summit will offer both organisations and consumers who want to be at the forefront of system change the opportunity to come together and explore, discuss and grow the concept and practice of consumer-centred care.

The Summit will:

- Support the development of consumer leadership skills
- explore the major policy shifts required to achieve person-centred care systems and services
- showcase exemplary practice in consumer leadership
- bring together consumer leaders with clinical leaders, service providers, researchers and key decision-makers.

[Click here](#) to find out more. If you have any enquiries, please contact Sandra Gardam at [event@chf.org.au](mailto:event@chf.org.au)



## SARRAH 2020 National Rural and Remote Allied Health Conference - Sharing Stories: Shaping Success

Hosted by SARRAH since 1995, this biennial conference is for all involved in regional, rural and remote health. SARRAH invites you to Townsville

- to hear a range of eminent speakers,
- to join us as we share stories to shape the future success for remote, rural and regional allied health, and
- to celebrate 25 years of SARRAH networking, advocacy and events.

**When:** 13-15 September 2020

**Where:** The Ville, Townsville

[Click here](#) to find out more.

## Full Website Links in this Newsletter

Rural and Remote Health Newsletter: Access to health services:

Issue 2: November 2019 – January 2020

[https://chf.org.au/sites/default/files/rural\\_and\\_remote\\_health\\_sig\\_newsletter\\_issue\\_2.pdf](https://chf.org.au/sites/default/files/rural_and_remote_health_sig_newsletter_issue_2.pdf)

Australia's Long-Term National Health Plan

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australias-long-term-national-health-plan>

Primary Health Network Map Locator:

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publicshing.nsf/Content/PHN-Locator>

Australia's Health Panel - Impact of climate change on health survey report:

<https://chf.org.au/ahpclimatesurvey>

Australia's Health Panel:

<https://chf.org.au/australias-health-panel-0>

Rural Innovations Changing Healthcare 2020:

<https://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/rural-health/events/rural-innovations-changing-healthcare-2020>

7<sup>th</sup> Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium:

<https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/7rrhss/home>

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care – Better Care Everywhere:

<https://events.catalystevents.com.au/website/8086/>

CHF's Summit 2020: Shifting Gears:

<http://www.chfsummit2020.com.au/ehome/index.php?eventid=518286&>

SARRAH 2020 National Rural and Remote Allied Health Conference:

<http://www.sarraconference.com/>

Consumers Health Forum of Australia:

<https://chf.org.au/>

## What is the Rural and Remote Health Special Interest Group?

The special interest group is an informal network of consumers who have self-selected to work more intensively on policy issues.

We currently have 34 members from around Australia, from Darwin to Port Pirie and Kalgoorlie to Ingham.



Each have extensive experience working within the health system (health promotion, aged care, palliative care, disability, dental, mental health, maternity services, clinical nurse, pharmacist, health services management and paramedic).

Some members are consumer representatives, representing consumer views on a number of steering committees and working groups nationwide.

Our members live (or have lived) in rural and remote areas across Australia and offer a wide range of lived experiences, from access

challenges, to living with depression, rare chronic conditions, and complications from medical implants.

## About Consumers Health Forum of Australia

Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) is the national peak body representing the interests of Australian healthcare consumers and those with an interest in healthcare consumer affairs. CHF works to achieve safe, quality, timely healthcare for all Australians, supported by accessible health information and systems. Find out more [here](#).

