



PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY RHĀNZ FOR IMMEDIATE USE, 23 AUGUST 2015

Increased focus on rural depression

The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (RHĀNZ) is pleased to be working with the Ministry of Health to provide increased training for health professionals, business networks and communities to tackle depression in rural communities.

Health Minister Jonathan Coleman and Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy today announced the increased training measures as part of the one-off \$500,000 funding boost for mental health initiatives targeted at rural communities, announced by the Ministers at Fieldays.

The Ministers said that The Ministry of Health would work with RHĀNZ to provide the increased training.

RHĀNZ chairperson, Dr Jo Scott-Jones, said improving mental health outcomes and minimising suicide risk for rural populations was a top priority for all 34 members of RHĀNZ.

“We know that mental health outcomes are poorer for rural communities than urban communities, and we are particularly concerned about the pressures building for our farming families, and the health providers who care for them,” he said.

“This funding is essentially emergency response funding, for which the Government wants to see evidence-based solutions relevant to farming families. In developing our solutions we have sought the advice of members and suicide prevention experts and are confident that our recommendations are realistic and based on what is known to be effective.

“We will develop a co-ordinated approach to upskilling rural health professionals, rural business networks and rural communities in suicide prevention strategies, and increase access to skilled healthcare in the regions of highest need. We believe that these two activities will address several aspects of this complex problem,” he said.

RHĀNZ Chief Executive, Michelle Thompson, said RHĀNZ was expertly placed to oversee the implementation of these new initiatives due to its broad membership base.

“We bring together a valuable combination of rural health professionals, rural industry and rural community groups, which is exactly what this problem needs. Leveraging the expertise, resourcing and good-will within the RHÄNZ membership will give an excellent return on investment for the Government.”

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Note to Editors:

The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand was established in May 2012 and represents a united voice from across multiple rural sector organisations. Its aim is to provide solutions and influence policy affecting the health and wellbeing of rural communities www.rhaanz.org.nz.

Current members: <http://www.rhaanz.org.nz/membership/current-members/>