

26 May 2016



Budget 2016

It is good to see an increased emphasis on vulnerable communities and increasing access to services in Budget 2016, but the Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (RHANZ) is disappointed there are no specific references to the needs of rural communities.

RHANZ is a peak organisation with 42 member organisations, all interested in the health and wellbeing of rural communities.

Key pressure points our members have identified that will impact rural health and wellbeing are increased social cohesion, increased capacity in our rural health workforce, increased research and information about rural health outcomes, improved mobile and internet connectivity, and well supported rural health facilities.

RHANZ chairperson Dr Jo Scott-Jones says an increased budget for research activities is welcome, provided that the Health Research Council is encouraged to support research that is driven by the needs of rural communities.

“We applaud the government's plan to put additional funding into health once again, investing in the health of the most vulnerable communities will have positive impacts, not only on the economics of the country but also in our sense of wellbeing as a society,” Dr Scott-Jones says.

“Rural communities are high needs communities, and their vulnerability is only made worse by difficulty accessing services due to workforce pressures and the challenges of being distant from increasingly centralised health service providers.”

Dr Scott-Jones says it costs more to provide services in rural communities because of these difficulties and, while it is heartening to see an increased emphasis on vulnerable communities and increasing access to services, it is disappointing that there is no specific reference to the needs of rural communities in Budget 2016.

For more information contact:

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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/](http://www.rhaanz.org.nz/membership/current-members/)