

17 June 2016



RHÄNZ delighted to be involved with the Government's Rural Mental Wellness Initiatives

The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (RHÄNZ) is delighted to be taking a lead role in two of the Government's rural mental wellness initiatives announced at Fieldays today.

The first announcement includes the development of a Framework to Improve Mental Health and Addiction Outcomes for rural New Zealanders and the second is a continuation of the Emergency Response to Support Rural Mental Health.

RHÄNZ is looking forward to working with both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Primary Industries over the coming year.

"The Framework is a long overdue and exciting piece of work" said Michelle Thompson, Chief Executive of RHÄNZ.

"Shortly we will begin recruiting a team of experts from within the RHÄNZ membership - and other key stakeholder groups - to help us with this important and complex piece of work."

"We will also be continuing our work upskilling rural health professionals in suicide prevention strategies and strengthening the clinical linkages between rural health services on the ground and the rural support trusts around the country.

"We know that mental health outcomes are poorer for rural communities than urban communities.

Improving mental health and addiction outcomes and minimising suicide risk for rural populations is a top priority for all 42 members of RHÄNZ.

"Ensuring our rural communities have improved access to high quality, safe and effective health services that are able to enhance their mental wellbeing and social cohesiveness will be a key focus for this Framework," said Dr Jo Scott-Jones, Chairperson of RHÄNZ.

RHÄNZ Council member and Federated Farmers health and safety spokesperson Katie Milne said this is a much needed resource in rural communities.

"Farmers are doing it tough at the moment and when times get rough we need a responsive system in place to provide expert support quickly.

"We're pleased this programme is continuing into the next phase; the longevity and sustainability of this important programme is a top priority."

"We believe RHÄNZ is expertly placed to lead this work as we bring together a valuable combination of rural health professionals, rural industry and rural community groups which is exactly what this complex issue needs," said Dr Jo Scott-Jones.

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/>

ENDS

For further comment contact:

Dr Jo Scott-Jones, Chairperson, 027 475 0488

Katie Milne, Council member and Federated Farmers' spokesperson for rural health, 027 424 4546