



## **NZ's national rural health group's future in the balance**

**April 12, 2018**

The future of The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (RHAANZ) is in the balance tonight after the government has failed to promise support of the national rural health group.

RHAANZ chair Dr Martin London and chief executive Michelle Thompson met the Rural Communities Minister Damien O'Connor in Napier today to discuss the organisation's case for some central funding support.

"We are very disappointed as the minister was unable to confirm any government funding support for NZ's national rural health umbrella organisation.

"Our financial predicament is symbolic of the general under funding of rural health services. This puts us in an extremely difficult situation, our future hangs in the balance," Thompson says.

"It seems completely at odds with Labour/NZ First's election promises to address equity of access to health services for rural people, to improve health research and to boost our rural regions.

"We have already identified the top five priorities negatively impacting the health and wellbeing of our rural people and what's more we've also come up with the solutions for addressing them.

"We first put our funding proposal to government back in November, so we think we've been more than patient and six months was ample time for them to consider our case.

"We asked for just \$1 for every rural person, which is \$600,000. We believe this is chicken feed in the scheme of things.

"The other two national rural health alliances in the world, Australia and America, have both had Govt funding for decades in recognition of the value they bring to Govt and rural communities.

"Our board had resolved to begin winding down if we did not get that support today. We are meeting under urgency tomorrow."

**For more information contact** RHAANZ chief executive Michelle Thompson on 021 2347413, RHAANZ chair, Dr Martin London on 027 464 1191, or Make Lemonade editor-in-chief Kip Brook on 0275 030188.

**Photo:** RHAANZ chief executive Michelle Thompson