



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **RHAANZ places spotlight on critical issues impacting rural New Zealanders**

**12 December 2018**

Members of the Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa (RHAANZ) gathered in Wellington in November 2018 to discuss, debate and determine key issues impacting on the health and wellbeing of rural New Zealanders.

This event, known as Rural Fest 2018, identified five critical issues impacting rural New Zealanders, along with specific calls to action for the government. The issues identified were presented to the Minister for Health, Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities and MPs from the four main political parties, with a focus on working collaboratively to find solutions.

Rural Fest 2018 produced the Rural Health Road Map that represents a united view from across the rural sector. It outlines an urgent need to establish a definition of rurality as it pertains to health so that data can be collected and analysed in order to clearly identify the needs and health outcomes of rural New Zealanders.

The Road Map also calls for Government to ensure that it's recently adopted Rural Proofing Policy (recognising the importance of rural communities and the unique challenges that they face), is applied to all government processes - especially those relating to the health and wellbeing of rural communities.

Other issues impacting rural New Zealanders include the rural workforce crisis, a call to review funding models for health and wellbeing services and the need for a stronger focus on mental health in rural communities.

'Isolation emerged strongly as an everyday issue that members believe is impacting on the health and wellbeing of the people they work with or represent', says Chairperson Professor Jane Mills.

Having appointed Professor Jane Mills as Chairperson, the RHAANZ is working with renewed focus to provide solutions and influence policy affecting rural communities.

A well-regarded rural health academic, Mills is convinced about the urgent need for action.

“There is much to celebrate about living and working in rural New Zealand. But for the approximately 600,000 people who live rurally, there are also many challenges that can only be addressed by working together and with urgency” says Mills.

RHAANZ members are looking forward to working together and with the government to bring the calls to action in the Rural Health Road Map into reality.

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To view the Rural Health Road Map 2018 visit: <http://www.rhaanz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Rural-Health-Roadmap-2018.pdf>