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### **Draft PC report highlights need to improve rural mental health services**

The National Rural Health Alliance, the peak body for rural and remote health in Australia, welcomed the release of the Productivity Commission's draft mental health report today.

"Access to mental health services in the bush is a significant issue and the Productivity Commission's draft report confirms this," said National Rural Health Alliance CEO Dr Gabrielle O'Kane.

"There is unequal funding for mental health services in rural and remote areas, often no services where they are clearly needed and there is ongoing fragmentation and a lack of coordination to support the workforce that does exist.

"It's positive to see that some of the Productivity Commission's draft recommendations are focused on rural Australia, such as more funding for psychiatrist positions in rural and remote areas and ways to make working in rural and remote areas a more attractive option for health professionals.

"We call on the Government to have a rural focus when considering the Productivity Commission's final recommendations next year."

According to the Productivity Commission's draft report:

- The prevalence of mental illness is relatively similar across Australia, however people in capital cities are much more likely to access services;
- Regional communities have a 54% higher rate of suicide than capital cities;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to die by suicide and twice as likely to be hospitalised due to mental illness.

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