

## **Amended Statement of Expectations for the National Rural Health Commissioner**

### **1. Introduction**

This Statement outlines the Australian Government's expectations about the role and responsibilities of the National Rural Health Commissioner (the Commissioner), the Commissioner's relationship with the Government, issues of transparency and accountability and operational matters.

The Commissioner is a statutory appointment, independent from the Department of Health (the Department) and the responsible Minister. This position has been established to independently and impartially improve rural health policies and champion the cause of rural practice.

The Government recognises and respects the statutory independence of the Commissioner. It is imperative that, as Commissioner, you act independently and objectively in performing functions and exercising powers as set out in Schedule 1 of the Part VA of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act). However, the Government expects that you take into account the Government's broad policy framework, including its agenda to reform the health workforce and improve the health outcomes of rural, regional and remote Australians, in performing your role and functions.

The Commissioner will work with rural, regional and remote communities, the health sector, universities, specialist training colleges and across all levels of Government to meet its statutory objectives. In addition, the Commissioner will assist to better target Australian Government interventions to support access to services and quality of services.

The rural health workforce and communities living in rural and remote areas will benefit from the introduction of the Commissioner by placing rural and remote issues at the forefront of government decision making.

The responsible Minister with oversight of rural health expects to be fully informed in a timely manner about the activities of the Commissioner and any emerging trends, problems or issues in respect of its functions. If requested by the Minister, the Commissioner may also provide advice to the Minister on matters relating to rural health reform.

### **2. Priorities for the Rural Health Commissioner**

As Commissioner, you will:

1. Work with rural, regional and remote communities, the health sector, universities, specialist training colleges and across all levels of government to improve rural health policies.
2. Assist the Australian Government to better target interventions in regional, rural and remote areas to support access to services and quality of services, as well as champion the cause of rural practice.
3. Develop and define new National Rural Generalist Pathway.
4. Work with the health sector and training providers to define what it is to be a Rural Generalist. This includes developing options for increased access to training and appropriate remuneration for Rural Generalists, recognising their extra skills and workload.
5. Consult with stakeholders to give consideration to the needs of the entire rural health workforce, including but not limited to nursing, dental health, pharmacy, Indigenous health, mental health, midwifery, occupational therapy, physical therapy and allied health.

6. If requested by the Minister, consult with state and territory governments to identify, assess and develop policy options to address current or emerging regional, rural and remote health reform opportunities on a national level, and to ensure effective information exchange across jurisdictions.
7. Liaise with national peak professional organisations, consumer organisations, rural health stakeholders and other advisory committees in developing solutions that reflect community needs.
8. Provide national leadership for regional, rural and remote health, and work with the Government to progress nationally agreed goals in regional, rural and remote health, including: flexible models of service delivery and workforce development, best practice approaches, and future national policy responses.

The first priority for you as the Commissioner is to work with health professionals and other rural stakeholders, and with the state and territory governments, to define what it means to be a Rural Generalist and develop the National Rural Generalist Pathway.

While the development of the National Rural Generalist Pathway is the first priority for your role as Commissioner, the role is much broader than the medical workforce alone, and will include consultation with stakeholders to give consideration to the entire health workforce needs in rural and remote Australia.

### **3. Stakeholder relationships**

Your role as Commissioner will require you to work closely with a number of stakeholders and the Government expects that you will engage professionally and collaboratively with relevant stakeholders throughout your appointment. These stakeholders include rural, regional and remote communities, the health sector, universities, specialist training colleges and state and territory governments.

A key stakeholder group is the Rural Health Stakeholder Roundtable (the Roundtable), which was established to promote rural health strategic discussion and to bring together key rural health stakeholders to assist the Government with informing and developing national rural health policy. The Government expects that you will engage closely with members of the Roundtable and take part in meetings, which are held biannually.

As the Commissioner you will be a member of the Distribution Working Group, which has been established to: investigate and consider ways to modify or update the existing district of workforce shortage classification system; to consider the implementation and design of the Modified Monash Model; and to consider mechanisms to encourage equitable distribution of the health workforce.

The Government expects that you will work collaboratively and closely with the Department and the Minister, and that you are aware of the Government's agenda on rural health reform. Conducive to an effective working relationship, the Department will continue to consult with you on any issues that may impact on you fulfilling your statutory objective or compliance with the law.

In your role as Commissioner, you should maintain professional and collaborative working relationships with other key stakeholders, particularly the broader rural health sector.

#### **4. Organisational Governance and Financial Management**

As Commissioner, you do not hold any financial delegation powers, or have any specific employment powers. The Secretary of the Department of Health may enter into an arrangement with you for the services of Australia Public Service (APS) employees in the department to be made available. This is intended as assistance for the position whilst you undertake your duties. Further, it is requested that you continue to manage the affairs as National Rural Health Commissioner in a way that promotes the efficient, effective and ethical use of resources. In support of this and in line with the allocated budget for the position, the Department will continue to provide you with the necessary corporate support, policies and systems to fulfil the functions of your role.

Where you are assisted by staff employed by the Department of Health under the *Public Service Act 1999* you should ensure you uphold and promote the APS Values and ensure that all APS employees adhere to the APS Code of Conduct.

#### **5. Reporting**

As part of your legislative requirements under 79AC of the Act, you must prepare and present to the Minister a draft report about your functions that includes advice and recommendations before 1 January 2020, or earlier if specified by the Minister.

You must also prepare and present to the Minister a Final Report about your functions that includes advice and recommendations before 1 July 2020, which will be tabled in the House of the Parliament, within five sitting days of the Minister receiving the final report. Reporting requirements may continue beyond 30 June 2020, should the Commissioner's position be extended beyond that date.

Additionally, you must, within three months after the end of each calendar year, prepare and give to the Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report on your activities during the previous calendar year, which also includes any other matters that the Minister may direct you to include in the report.

In addition to the reports that you prepare as part of your legislative requirements, it is expected that you provide input to the Department's annual report and other publications as requested from time to time.

#### **6. Conclusion**

The Government expects that the appointment of the Commissioner will benefit the rural health workforce and communities living in rural and remote areas by placing rural and remote issues at the forefront of government decision making. In your role as Commissioner, the Government expects that you will help improve rural health policies and champion the cause of rural practice in Australia. As Commissioner, you will also assist to better target Australian Government interventions to support access to services and quality of services. The Government expects that you will work cooperatively and collaboratively with the Department, rural health stakeholders, and all levels of government to develop the National Rural Generalist Pathway and progress rural health reform.