

# Media Release

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## Hearing from rural children about their needs - and acting on what we hear

A special pre-Conference event in Alice Springs will consider some of the hard questions about the wellbeing of children in more remote parts of Australia.

*Standing up for Country Kids* will develop recommendations about how best to give a voice to the needs of rural children. It is being held in the lead-up to the *Caring for Country Kids* conference being held in the Alice Springs Convention Centre (17-19 April).

Nigel Stewart, a regional paediatrician from South Australia, will argue that the needs of rural infants and children can be better recognised and met through political action.

"We need to let them speak for themselves but then get behind their demands," Dr Stewart said.

"We have the data and evidence, which speak loudly about the serious lifestyle challenges that many kids face in rural and remote areas," he said. "We need to agree on what the priorities are and get governments and other institutions to listen - and we need public and media attention."

Rhiannon Cook, from the NSW Council of Social Service, will describe campaigning in that State for positive outcomes for children living in poverty. Tim Moore, a researcher who has specialised in child protection issues, will talk about the importance of [participation by](#) young people facing adversity in the means of resolving the challenges they face.

Other speakers in the workshop will be Megan Mitchell, the Children's Commissioner; Kerry Arabena, Director of Indigenous Health Equity at Melbourne University; and Jo McCubbin. Jo is a Regional paediatrician in Gippsland, is on Council of the NRHA, and is an effective activist for kids and communities in her home region.

The workshop will focus on the differences between urban children and those in rural and remote areas. It will set the pattern for the main *Caring for Country Kids* conference by developing a set of action steps for improving rural kids' health nationally.

It will take a strengths-based approach, considering how the benefits for children of living in rural and remote areas can be enhanced and become available for children throughout rural areas.

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