

10 January 2020

Ray Anton
Chair
NZ Rural Hospital Network
2/88 The Terrace
WELLINGTON 6011

Dear Ray

NZ Rural Hospital Network

I write in response to your email of 20 November to the Director-General and on behalf of the Ministry of Health's (the Ministry) Executive Team members you met with on November 2019. The Ministry values interactions with the sector and your summary of the collective issues for rural hospitals, as developed at your recent Rural Hospital Summit (the Summit), provided valuable views from your part of the health sector.

It was helpful to hear about the discussions at the Summit and the resultant four areas of priority focus for your Network:

- Establish a united rural health voice
- Develop and implement a rural workforce plan
- Set equitable standards of service and access
- Build a rural health service policy and funding framework.

I appreciate the work behind the development of your two proposed solutions; development of a national rural hospital strategy and the extension of the NZ Rural Recruitment and Locum contract to include rural hospitals.

While there is no current intention to develop a rural strategy, the views and expertise of your members will be an important addition to some of the Ministry's strategic priority programmes. We recommend you join us in investing the time and effort to develop constructive actions that move the sector forward.

To ensure your expertise and viewpoint is heard in strategic pieces of work, the Ministry is currently identifying pieces of work where your organisation and individual members can participate and provide a uniquely rural viewpoint.

Extension of the rural recruitment and locum contract to include rural hospitals could certainly be considered and Ministry staff will discuss this possibility with the current contract holder, the NZ Rural General Practice Network.

I also understand you requested a single point of contact within the Ministry which is sensible, especially in order to connect you with national strategic pieces of work. Alison Randall, Principal Advisor, in the first instance and Rachael Bayliss, Senior Advisor, in support, will be your contact points within the Ministry. I am aware that you, Alison and Rachael have worked together in the past and I expect this helpful relationship to continue. They will contact you in February 2020 to discuss identified strategic programmes and extension of the Rural Recruitment and Locum contract.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathy Rex', written in a cursive style.

Kathy Rex
Acting Group Manager, Primary Health Care System Innovation and Improvement