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“Too little, too late” Independent slams Morrison Government record on rural health

Independent candidate for Indi Helen Haines said the Morrison Government's announcement of \$100m for rural clinical trials is welcome news but too little, too late for a government that has failed to prioritise rural health.

“I welcome Mr Morrison's fresh concern for rural health and clinical trials,” Dr Haines said. “But this is an ad-hoc response in the heat of an election campaign when what we really need is a long-term, national rural health plan.”

“Rural health policy should be driven through a dedicated rural health portfolio. We had such a portfolio, but it was axed by this government when they dumped Malcolm Turnbull as Prime Minister last year.

“Less than two per cent of the national health research funding has been committed to rural health. This year's federal budget in particular failed to address the critical workforce shortages we have in allied health professions in rural Australia.”

“What we need is nationally coordinated strategy that addresses the systemic reasons why the health outcomes of rural and regional Australians is so much lower than our city relatives.”

“Patchwork policy will not address these challenges.”

Dr Haines said the announcement demonstrated the government's lack of a coordinated approach to a range of regional services, not just health.

“On too many issues the impact of policy on rural and regional communities comes as afterthought. This is exactly why we need strong, independent rural voices in Parliament who understand first hand what this impact looks like,” she said.

Dr Haines is a former nurse, midwife and director of the University of Melbourne Rural Health Academic Network. She is a previous chair of Ovens and King Community Health and a former director of Hume Medicare Local.

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