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Health system failing country people

The NSW Farmers' Association's Rural Mental Health Network says figures showing people in rural areas are missing out on Medicare-funded psychological treatment is further confirmation of a two-tiered health system between the city and the country.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie says rural and remote patients are at a distinct disadvantage from their metropolitan cousins both in terms of cost of services and access to services.

"The rush of Medicare-funded psychological treatment is not at all surprising to the Rural Mental Health Network," Mr Laurie said.

"However, the Australian Government appears to have seriously underestimated the demand for services in this area. Clearly more resources are required, and urgently.

The analysis of data from the Medicare Benefits Schedule indicates that those people in rural areas, those aged under 25 or those from low socio-economic groups require improved access to mental health services.

"By this analysis, the prospect for a 20 year old from a low socioeconomic background in a rural area would therefore be frightening," Mr Laurie said.

"The Network is alarmed that there is no rural-metropolitan breakdown of detailed data on these important services and is calling upon the Federal Government to release the data immediately," Mr Laurie said.

The Network says whilst this week's figures highlight an alarming number of people suffering mental illness, they are also a welcome sign that people are asking for help.

The NSW Farmers' Association's Rural Mental Health Network has been meeting in Sydney this week. It brings together like minded organisations like Anglicare, Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety, Council of Social Services, NSW, Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health and the Red Cross to address the issue of mental health in rural and remote regions of NSW.

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Fast fact: The Freshest Australia horticulture chemical residue testing program shows a compliance rate of 98% nationally