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Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for the invitation to the National Rural Health Alliance to make comment on the paper *A Stronger, More Diverse and Independent Community Sector*. I realise it is now after 5pm and the consultation is officially closed but I thought I would make a couple of observations to you via email.

The National Rural Health Alliance has been the recipient of peak body funding through the Department of Health and Aged Care (currently funded under the National Preventive Health Strategy). We could not do our work to support rural Australians without this funding but we do note that the lack of indexation on our funding over the years has been difficult to absorb given all the rising costs in other parts of our work.

As a general observation, it seems that government agencies do not understand how much time and administration is required for non government organisations to apply for these grants. For those of us fortunate enough to be in receipt of Commonwealth grant funding, it is understandable that there are reporting obligations and that regular performance and finance reports are required. However, it does seem that the templates and proformas required for this reporting change regularly making it very difficult for organisations to keep up with the requirements. In our case there have been many hours of work life lost to doing the reports and sometimes needing to redo reports because there is a decision to change the template with fairly short notice.

In our situation, we have been advised that in future we will have to submit our Annual Report by 30 September each year as part of our performance reporting. In my experience most non-government organisations have their Annual General Meeting later in the year (often October or November) and Annual Reports cannot be approved until these meetings. I did talk to the Grants Hub about this to explain the practices of non-government organisations and why this new requirement to have Annual Reports in by 30 September could cause problems for some organisations. I was advised that we would have to change our processes and have our AGMs earlier in the year. This does not recognise the fact that for an Annual Report to be completed it needs to have audited accounts so by the time the Annual Report is written, the finances are officially audited, the report is graphically designed and an AGM can be held to approve the report/financials, it will be difficult to achieve before 30 September. It is an example of an arbitrary requirement which could cause problems for many non-government organisations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am happy to discuss further if needed or to clarify anything I have mentioned.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Director, Policy and Strategy Development  
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National  
**Rural Health**  
Alliance

**30**  
YEARS  
INCORPORATED  
11 AUGUST 1993

*The National Rural Health Alliance acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders both past and present.*