

### WOMEN DRIVING HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

The theme of International Women's Day 2023 is Embrace Equity.

Embracing Equity means taking action so that more women are in and able to access education, jobs, opportunities and security. It should see more women on corporate boards, in skilled trades, with higher superannuation balances, greater housing security, safer environments and better access to services. It also means re-balancing the value placed on underpaid feminised workforces and given higher priority than we choose to as a society.

It also means simply acting on what the nation needs and the chance advance equity in the process is staring you in the face.

What are we talking about? Allied health professionals: more than 25 different skilled professions who work in the public, private and community sectors, in health, disability, aged care, early childhood, education, veterans' services and more. They help people to maintain health, prevent illness, diagnose, treat and recover from illness and injury. They specialise in enabling therapies that help people to develop, recover and retain their independence, their capacity to work, earn and live well.

This workforce includes over 200,000 people. They improve lives – helping people to stay well and productive and independent, to recover from illness and injury and lead fuller, healthier lives.

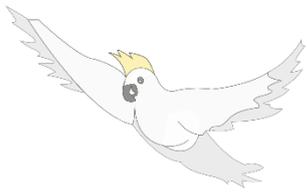
- They are leading job growth and demand. Government projects jobs growth demand will be just over 9 per cent across the economy over the next 5 years. While for many of these professions it will be over 20 or even 30 per cent.
- They are leading demand in fastest growing jobs sector of the economy: needed in health, aged care, disability services, early childhood development and education – in public, private and community-based services.
- And critically, most of this workforce are women – over 70 per cent in several professions and well over 90 per cent in some.

There simply are not enough of them and, worse, there is no national plan, to build this workforce.

So why aren't allied health professions, skilled and in high demand, not a central focus in the Government's jobs and gender equality push?

The Prime Minister spoke to a UN Women Australia Parliamentary Breakfast on 8 February, saying the Government *"will not rest in our efforts to bring about real, meaningful equality. To make sure we govern for all Australians. That's why we're putting women's participation and opportunity at the heart of our economic agenda."*

Gender Equality is and should be a central strategy in our national economic and social agenda. It reinforces higher workforce participation, equity, access, workforce and skills development, skills utilisation, productivity and community wellbeing.



# SARRAH

Services for Australian  
Rural and Remote Allied Health

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Political leaders have concentrated on the number of women. Rightly, political leaders are looking to increase the representation of women on boards and on political front-benches. Efforts continue to improve recognition of workers in child and aged care, cleaners and others who deserve attention. But in the middle are pathways and professions that keep the country going – essential skills, avenues to financial security and fulfilling careers, able to accommodate the shifting dynamics of work and life balance. Enabling greater equity.

Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH), the peak body for allied health professionals working in rural and remote Australia, is proud to acknowledge the amazing efforts and contribution of allied health professionals, making the lives of many millions of Australians every year. Embrace Capacity; Embrace Equity.

On this IWD SARRAH encourages our leaders to get behind the workforce opportunities where women excel, where we have critical shortages and future demand growth is certain: to get behind allied health professions.

A good start would be to commission a national Allied Health Workforce Strategy as an immediate priority.

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SARRAH is the peak body representing rural and remote allied health professionals (AHPs) working in public, private and/or community settings SARRAH advocates on behalf of rural and remote Australian communities. SARRAH maintains that every Australian should have access to health services wherever they live, and the allied health services are fundamental to the well-being of all Australians.

<https://www.sarrah.org.au/>

**Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health**

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