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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### LARGEST EVER GATHERING OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS TO OCCUR IN SOUTH WEST QUEENSLAND

**SERVICE DEMAND:** South West on track to record a 41% increase in demand for Mental Health Services.

[CLICK HERE: Dropbox link for images to support story.](#)

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The challenge of maintaining a stable and sustainable primary health care workforce will be one of the key agenda items on this weekend's landmark South West Health Forum to be held in Roma, the largest gathering of its kind held in the region.

More than 100 key health stakeholders will meet in the heart of the South West, including government representatives, GPs and nurses, Indigenous health services, allied healthcare professionals and leaders in healthcare research and strategy.

The two-day Forum is a collaboration between Health Workforce Queensland and the Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) and aims to identify the gaps in the health workforce, policy barriers and skills shortages, and to hear about the array of initiatives currently active in the region.

"It's no secret there are ongoing challenges for regions like the South West with respect to maintaining a health workforce that effectively meets the needs of communities with increasingly complex health requirements," WQPHN CEO Sandy Gillies said.

"The value of this Forum is that it brings together some of the most eminent minds in healthcare to share research, showcase current initiatives, but crucially establish a pathway forward that ensures South West Queenslanders can continue to rely on their local health networks to support them."

"Across Western Queensland, no community's health needs are the same as the next one down the road, each local health provider has their own story, which is why this Forum is an important platform to share unique experiences of what each community needs," Sandy Gillies said.

While full year data will be collated at the end of the 2021 financial year, latest WQPHN forecasting shows health services in the South West are currently experiencing dramatic surges in demand.

From mid 2020, Primary Mental Health Care Service utilisation is expected to increase by 41%, while mental healthcare delivered via telehealth is forecast to increase by 28%, with recent rises primarily attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WQPHN funded allied health services are predicted to surge to a 20% increase in use, with the highest demand recorded in exercise physiology, physiotherapy and podiatry.

Health Workforce Queensland CEO Chris Mitchell says the demand for services continues to climb and there is a need for additional health workforce, greater flexibility in service and workforce arrangements for remote and rural communities, particularly around shared funding models, staffing and skill mix to maximise the use of multidisciplinary teams.

“Collaborating with communities and local health service providers is how we can best ensure we respond to known and emerging shortages that occur in the health workforce of the South West,” Mr Mitchell said.

“For example, we have had recent success with the recruitment of two new General Practitioners to service the St George region via a relationship with the local Indigenous health provider Goondir Health Services and the Remote Vocational Training Scheme.”

“We are very proud to be involved in this Health Forum, which is a collaborative event aiming to connect and integrate services and workforce solutions, enhancing the health of the communities in the South West.”

**INVITED DELEGATES ONLY- South West Health Forum, March 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, Explorers Inn, 44778 Warrego Highway, Roma.**

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**For picture and interview opportunities:**

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