

### Rural health journal shines a light on physical and mental health

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What impact do bushfires, COVID-19 and climate change have on rural health?

These are some of the questions asked by guest editors Martin Jones, David Mills and Richard Gray in the latest issue of the *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, which is available now.

National Rural Health Alliance CEO Dr Gabrielle O’Kane said that in addition to looking at timely issues like bushfires and COVID-19, this issue of the *Journal* had a special focus on the physical wellbeing of people living with a mental illness in rural and remote communities.

“Recent events have really brought the physical and mental health of people in rural Australia into focus,” said Dr O’Kane.

“In particular, bushfires and COVID-19 disproportionately affect people in rural communities, not least because of poorer access to health services and a higher likelihood of having multiple physical and mental health problems.

“This issue of the *Australian Journal of Rural Health* shines a light on the need to look after the physical health of people living with mental illness in rural Australia.

“As Editor in Chief Russell Roberts says in his editorial, about 80% of people with a mental illness have a coexisting physical health condition, and physical health conditions are responsible for 10 times more deaths of people with mental illness than suicide.

“We are pleased to highlight these important matters in this issue of the *Journal*, as well as feature work by some of Australia’s leading rural health scholars. In these challenging times, this sort of research is needed more than ever.”

The latest issue of the *Australian Journal of Rural Health* is available [here](#). Commentary by the three guest authors is freely accessible and other content is available on request.

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