**Abstract submitted for the 5th NSW Rural Health and Research Congress**

**Twin Towns, Tweed Heads, 9 - 11 November 2016**

**Congress Stream:** 4. Palliative/end of life care: meeting the need – Oral or Poster

**Alternate Stream:** 6. Integrated care and partnerships: rethinking relationships – Oral or Poster

**Abstract Title:** Transforming the Palliative Approach in Rural Residential Aged Care Facilities

**Author/s:** Rebecca Dalwood, Specialist Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Specialist Broken Hill Health Service, Far West LHD, PO Box 457, Broken Hill, NSW 2880

**Sarah Wenham,** Specialist Palliative Care Physician Far West Local Health District, PO Box 457, Broken Hill, NSW 2880

Melissa Cumming, Director - Cancer Services, Innovation & Palliative Care Far West Local Health District, PO Box 457, Broken Hill, NSW 2880

Elizabeth Perrie, Quality and Education Manager Southern Cross Care Broken Hill, PO Box 695, Broken Hill, NSW 2880

**Background**

The National Aged Care Alliance (2012) recommends systematically creating good linkages between Specialist Palliative Care (SPC) and Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) to improve quality of palliative care provision and outcomes for individuals and families.

A Decision Assist grant was used to enhance linkages between a rural SPC Team and three rural RACFs.

**Approach**

A systematic design and implementation included:

* Stakeholder engagement, planning meetings and mapping workshop with RACF, Primary Care and Hospital clinicians
* SPC Link-Nurse secondment to provide education, mentorship and ‘modelling’ of the palliative approach in RACFs
* Appointment of Palliative Approach Coordinators within each RACF
* Development of a suite of palliative approach clinical documentation
* Pre and post data collection to measure clinical and educational outcomes

**Outcomes / Results**

Improved palliative and end-of-life care for RACF residents was demonstrated by:

* Increased coordination of care
* Improved advance care planning
* Reduced unnecessary hospital admissions
* Increased residents dying in RACF
* More timely referrals to SPC for residents with complex needs
* Greater knowledge, skills and confidence of RACF staff and GPs to manage end-of-life care

**Take Home Message**

Sustainable improvements palliative and end-of-life care in RACFs can be achieved through embedding a systematic clinical approach, education, mentoring and enhancing linkages with SPC.