**Abstract submitted for the 4th Rural Health and Research Congress**

**Armidale 4-6 November 2015**

Congress Stream: Partnerships and Integrated Care – connecting rural people and services

Alternative Stream: Social determinants of health in the bush – the changing landscape

Abstract Title: A public-private partnership model for a rural physiotherapy service

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Background:

A collaborative of agencies that included Hume Medicare Local, Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD), Local Health Advisory Councils, local government councils and aged care facilities commissioned a project to investigate the viability of a private Physiotherapy service to provide services to the communities surrounding Finley NSW, given service gaps, population demographics and the prevalence of obesity and osteoarthritis.

Approach:

The private physiotherapist outreached from a regional township to two rural communities where service gaps in physiotherapy had been identified. Allied Health Assistants were utilised to enhance the service between visits from the physiotherapist. Shared governance arrangements were established between the Medicare Local, local health district and the private physiotherapist to monitor service delivery and train and supervise allied health assistants.

Outcomes/Results:

During the pilot project period there were 754 physiotherapy and allied health assistant occasions of services across service streams which included chronic disease, acute and post-acute care, and private clientele. The project has now been expanded to incorporate a further two communities in the Finley-Berrigan-Jerilderie region.

Take-home message:

Private sector allied health services in rural communities are a potential resource in areas of workforce shortages.

Agencies working together to pool resources can foster consistent yet flexible service delivery models that meet the needs of rural communities, address service gaps in primary health service provision and support sustainable business development for private sector allied health.