



PRESS RELEASE issued by the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network for immediate use,
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New Network chairperson announced

Geraldine-Temuka-based nurse practitioner Sharon Hansen is the new interim chairperson of the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network.

Sharon is a registered nurse and nurse practitioner and previously the Network's deputy. She takes over the role from Opotiki GP Dr Jo Scott-Jones who chaired the organisation for the previous four years.

Sharon's area of practice is primary health care specialising in rural health. She initially qualified as a psychopaedic nurse in 1978 and then in general obstetrics in 1984 before completing her bachelor of nursing in 1997 and masters of nursing in 2005, and registered as nurse practitioner in 2007. She was initially involved with the Network board in 1997 and became a regional representative in 2007.

Sharon is only the second nurse in the Network's 27 year history to chair the membership-based organisation, which represents and advocates for the rural health workforce.

Sharon says she is honoured to be taking over the leadership role representing all rural general practitioners and rural general practice overall.

"My focus and the focus of the Network remains firmly fixed on rural general practice, the challenges it faces as well as building on the strong gains it has made in recent years. The Network is on a solid foundation to deal with challenges the sector faces and to progress new directions and initiatives."

"While my approach will be considered and 'steady as she goes' my leadership style will also be fluid and collaborative, as some of the traditional attitudes of the past are not always useful to the growth of our profession."

The role of Network deputy chair has been filled by Dr Fiona Bolden, a rural GP from Raglan. Fiona also holds the position of Clinical Leader in Mental Health and Addiction Services with Midlands Health Network.

For more information contact Sharon Hansen 021 189 4391 or Network communications manager Rob Olsen 021 472 556.