



Media Statement

08/10/2025

For immediate release

Rural Health West welcomes new Board Chair Gary Smith

Rural Health West is delighted to announce the appointment of Gary Smith as incoming Chair of the Board.

Gary brings more than 40 years of leadership and advisory experience across the business, public, higher education and not-for-profit sectors.

He is a founding director of both the Noongar Advisory Company and the WA Aboriginal Leadership Institute and has previously served as Chancellor of Murdoch University and Co-Chair of Reconciliation WA.

For much of his career, Gary held senior leadership roles with the global advisory firm KPMG, specialising in governance, strategy, and leadership roles, before retiring in 2019 after seven years as the WA Chairman.

Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer, Professor Catherine Elliott, said Gary's appointment comes at an important time in the organisation's history.

"Gary has a reputation for using his commercial expertise in support of community outcomes, particularly in advancing Aboriginal leadership and reconciliation.

"His values and leadership align closely with our Strategic Plan 2025-2030, which prioritises Aboriginal partnerships, advocacy and the sustainability of rural health services," Professor Elliott said.

Gary Smith said he was honoured to be appointed Chair of Rural Health West.

"I am genuinely excited to take on the role of Chair at Rural Health West. Much of my career has been dedicated to advancing equity, whether in education, reconciliation or organisational leadership, and I see this appointment as a continuation of that commitment.

“Health is one of the most fundamental areas where equity matters, and too often people living outside metropolitan centres face barriers to the care they need. Rural Health West has a proud history of advocating for solutions, building partnerships and supporting that health professionals who help address those inequities.

“I look forward to working alongside the Board, Professor Catherine Elliott as CEO, and the dedicated staff to strengthen our impact. Together, we can ensure that rural and remote communities across Western Australia have the same opportunities to access quality healthcare as those living in the city.”

Professor Elliott also acknowledged the leadership of outgoing Chair, Hon. Terry ‘Tuck’ Waldron, who has guided the organisation with dedication and foresight.

“Tuck is a true champion of country WA. His warmth and generosity of spirit have been invaluable to the organisation over the past six years, and to me personally since commencing as CEO earlier this year,” Professor Elliott said.

Rural Health West supports health professionals and services across country WA, working to ensure equitable access to healthcare for rural, remote and Aboriginal communities.

Gary will commence his appointment as Chair following the Rural Health West Annual General Meeting on 28 October 2025.

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Please see over for biography

Biography

Gary Smith B.Comm, FCA, MAICD

Chair, Rural Health West

Gary Smith was appointed Chair of the Rural Health West Board in 2025, bringing with him over 40 years of leadership, governance, and advisory experience across a range of sectors.

Gary began his career with the global professional services firm KPMG, where he held senior leadership roles in Australia and abroad, advising boards and executives on organisational strategy, leadership, and culture. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and has built a career dedicated to guiding organisations through transformation and strengthening governance for long-term sustainability.

In addition to his corporate career, Gary has contributed extensively to public and community life. He has served as Chancellor of Murdoch University, a Co-Chair of Reconciliation WA and a founding Director of both the Noongar Advisory Company and the WA Aboriginal Leadership Institute - roles that reflect his commitment to equity, inclusion and reconciliation.

As Chair of Rural Health West, Gary brings his governance expertise and passion for positive social impact to the challenge of strengthening rural and remote healthcare. He is particularly focused on supporting Aboriginal health outcomes, improving access to care for regional communities, and ensuring sustainable workforce solutions across Western Australia.

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Media enquiries:

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Rural Health West aims to improve access to quality healthcare for rural communities through the provision of a highly skilled, motivated and sustainable medical and allied health workforce. We are a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.