More than 800 health professionals will gather in Alice Springs tonight for the start of the 8th National Rural Health Conference.

Minister for Health Dr Peter Toyne said this year’s theme is ‘Central to Health – Maintaining Wellbeing in Remote and Rural Australia.

“This is all about improving the health of Indigenous people and other populations,” Dr Toyne said.

High on the agenda is the need to strengthen our workforce, and the clinical practice needs of rural and remote health practitioners.

“I think the medical experts from around Australia and Alice Springs will be able to share their knowledge as they tackle these difficult problems.

“These issues are close to my heart having lived in a remote area for 20 years and I’m proud of what has been achieved since I’ve become Health Minister.

- **Child Health Initiative**: $2.2M to improve child health services and outcomes with the recruitment of 25 staff based in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.
- **Single Nurse Posts**: $1.4M to phase out Single Nurse Posts in remote and rural areas.
- **Renal Services**: a dialysis unit in Tennant Creek, satellite renal services in Elcho Island, Palmerston and other remote renal services, including support for the Western Desert Dialysis Project.

One of the standout speakers at this year’s conference is Royal Darwin Hospital’s Dr Christine Connors who will talking about chronic disease and Indigenous health.

National Rural Health Conference, which will be held at the Alice Springs Convention Centre from Thursday 10 March to Sunday 13 March.

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