

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 6 March 2009

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MATERNITY SERVICES - ANOTHER PIECE OF THE HEALTH REFORM JIGSAW

The Government's report into maternity services represents an important piece of a jigsaw which will show what an improved future health system for Australia might look like. The Alliance strongly supports the development of a collaborative inter-governmental National Maternity Services Plan - especially given the Report's urging that the availability of rural maternity services be a priority issue. Rural health consumers will be among the main beneficiaries. The full text of the Alliance statement will be available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> and is reproduced below.

The report of the Review is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/maternityservicesreview-report>

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friends Photography and Poetry Competition and friends Unsung Hero Award

In conjunction with the 10th National Rural Health Conference, friends of the Alliance is holding an amateur photography and poetry competition to highlight life in rural and remote Australia. friends are invited to enter by submitting entries about rural people at work or play; capturing the unique feel of life in rural/remote Australia; vibrant rural communities; the advantages of living outside a capital city; description of the beauty and reality of life in rural/remote Australia; healthy rural lifestyles; or any rural or remote theme. First prize in each category will be \$500. Further information and an entry form is available at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/friends/docs/ppc2009/friends_ppc_entry_form_2009.pdf

There are many people who work tirelessly for their rural or remote communities and contribute greatly on issues about which they are passionate. Rural and remote communities are much richer for their contribution, yet we often don't know who they are. They might be the quiet achiever, the volunteer, or the worker who constantly goes above and beyond their normal role to contribute to their community. The purpose of the friends Unsung Hero Award is to recognise these grassroots people who have made a significant contribution to the health of their remote, Indigenous or rural community. Nominations close 17 April 2009. Further information and an entry form are available at http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/friends/docs/uha2009/uha_entry_form_2009.pdf

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10th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 17-20 May 2009, Cairns, Qld

The 10th biennial National Rural Health Conference, to be held at the Cairns Convention Centre from 17-20 May, will seek to identify how people living in rural and remote areas are coping with the threats and opportunities they face. It will highlight both the serious challenges those people face and their resilience at a time when ecological issues remain serious and when the fiscal and financial environment has changed beyond recognition.

Promoting Cairns as "The Place to Be" the organisers have been under pressure to fit into the program the many threads, topics and research reports which this biennial event brings together. The result is a program rich in content and variety that is now accessible at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

The packed program will feature 18 keynote addresses from leaders in the health sector, as well as researchers and political identities. About

120 of more than 350 papers submitted for consideration will be delivered in concurrent sessions, interspersed with eight lengthier participatory workshops. Workshop topics include the role of the health sector in mitigating the effects of climate change; setting an Australian rural ethics agenda; and drought, drying and rural mental health. There will be a strong arts-in-health stream, with the North Queensland organisation Arts Nexus curating events.

The previous two biennial conferences each attracted more than 1,000 delegates and the organisers, led by the NRHA, are expecting similar registration numbers. "It's good to have the Conference back in Queensland after 18 years away and even better to have it in North Queensland - the first time in the tropics," said Atherton-based physiotherapist and conference convenor, Owen Allen. "We'll roll out a warm welcome and then get down to the serious business of making sure that the political change underway in the health sector provides some of the answers we've been looking for in rural and remote areas," Mr Allen said.

Further Contact: Lyn Eiszele - Conference Manager: (02) 6285 4660
Marshall Wilson - Media: 0419 664 155 <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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From: Jane Howorth <jane@eastcoastconferences.com.au>
Subject: Invitation to Register for AAG NSW Rural Conference

Australian Association of Gerontology (NSW Division) Rural Conference
1st & 2nd April 2009
Broken Hill Entertainment Centre, Broken Hill NSW

Come to Silver City, Broken Hill in Far West NSW, where the "outback comes alive" for a unique and exciting conference on ageing. The theme for the conference is 'Ageing in a Changing Environment' and reflects on the implications of a changing world on an ageing population, and how we respond to these changes to meet the challenges and opportunities that they bring. Set in Broken Hill, the conference also invites a perspective on ageing and aged care from the outback heart of Australia and will give rare insight into the innovative and clever ways that people are meeting and beating the challenges of providing care in rural and remote settings. The conference will inspire practitioners, researchers and academics to rethink what ageing means in a changing environment.

'Early' registration available through end of February is on \$295 for AAG members or \$355 for non members. Includes all conference sessions, material, daytime catering, welcome reception on 30th March and conference dinner on 1st April.

To register: Complete the registration form on conference website <http://www.aagruralconference.com>. Further information:

<http://www.aagconference.com> or please contact Conference Managers on 1300 368 783 or email jane@eastcoastconferences.com.au

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From: Nicole Beattie <Nicole_Beattie@live.com>
Subject: SARRAH: Easing into the Bush

SARRAH recently obtained an Australian Government Rural and Remote Health Education and Training (RHSET) grant to support allied health professionals working in remote and rural practice for the first time. The project will develop an online toolkit aimed at easing the transition into remote and rural practice. For further information about the project, and progress to date, visit <http://www.sarrah.org.au>

We are very interested in finding out more about any projects or resources available to support health professionals to transition to remote and rural practice. If you, or your organisation, are able to contribute to this important project, please contact the Project Manager Nicole Beattie on Nicole_Beattie@live.com

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VIRTUAL HOSPITAL TO HELP RURAL HEART PATIENTS
(Extract from Weekly Times article at http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2009/02/25/57421_national-news.html)

THE internet will be used to help cut higher rates of cardiac deaths in rural South Australia. The State Government has established a virtual cardiac hospital to allow patients living in remote areas to get better treatment. It was prompted by alarm over statistics which showed higher rates of deaths from heart attacks and heart disease in country areas compared to larger towns and across metropolitan Adelaide.

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INDIGENOUS PHARMACY ASSISTANTS ON THE RISE

A Government-funded pharmacy assistant scheme has seen a five-fold increase in participation by indigenous trainees. Details available at http://www.pharmacynews.com.au/articles/Indigenous-pharmacy-assistants-on-the-rise_z469013.htm

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The Australian Journal of Rural Health is a multidisciplinary journal, which aims to facilitate the formation of interdisciplinary networks to build and advance rural practice for all health professionals. Get published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health! The Journal welcomes short reports and letters to the editor as well as review articles, original research articles and clinical perspectives. For

useful tips on submitting your manuscript, read the FREE editorial, How to get published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health. Manuscripts can be submitted online at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ajrh> Manuscript Central or posted to AJRH. The Australian Journal of Rural Health is published on behalf of the National Rural Health Alliance by Blackwell Publishing Asia Pty Ltd 155 Cremorne Street Richmond Vic. 3121 Tel: +61 (0)3 9274 3100 Fax: +61 (0)3 9274 3101 E-mail: melbourne@johnwiley.com.au

February 2009 issue now available. Contents include:

Editorial - Rural health research

Articles

Health status differentials across rural and remote Australia

Influence of socioeconomic and cultural factors on rural health

Impact of rurality on environmental determinants and hazards

Innovative rural and remote primary health care models: What do we know and what are the research priorities?

Integration and coordination of care

Key considerations in delivering appropriate and accessible health care for rural and remote populations: Discussant overview

Multi-level rural community engagement in health

Multidisciplinary management of complex care

Impact of rurality on health practices and services: Summary paper to the inaugural rural and remote health scientific symposium

Evaluating the outcomes of rural health policy

Rural-urban disparities in health: How does Canada fare and how does Canada compare with Australia?

Grazing - Evidence-based policy versus evidence-based rural health care reality checks

Further information at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/ajr>

<<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/ajr>>

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CLOSING THE GAP

On 26th February, the Prime Minister made his first annual statement to Parliament on the Australian Government's Closing the Gap strategy.

"Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage: The Challenge for Australia" is available at

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/indigenous/closing_the_gap.htm and the Prime Minister's speech is at

http://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2009/speech_0840.cfm

At the same time, the Prime Minister announced that the Government will invest \$58.3 million to help tackle eye and ear diseases in Indigenous communities - including diseases rarely seen outside the third world.

The announcement is available at

http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2009/media_release_0844.cfm

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RHEF UPCOMING PROGRAMS (From <http://www.rhef.com.au/upcoming-programs/>)

The Rural Health Education Foundation will be broadcasting the following programs in March 2009.

All details including program information, panellists, broadcast times and other viewing options can be found on the Foundation's website <http://www.rhef.com.au> <<http://www.rhef.com.au>> or contacting the Foundation office on 02 6232 5480.

Birth in the Bush - Live webcast and simultaneous satellite broadcast
Tuesday 10th March 8:00pm AEDT

This program looks at the latest research on the care of pregnant women and their babies and possible medical complications. It explores the implications of such research for rural women and their health caregivers and examines models of patient care for women with low-risk pregnancies that enable them to give birth in local communities. The principles of good antenatal care and appropriate management of labour and birthing will be discussed along with the various roles and responsibilities of the rural maternity health care team and appropriate risk management strategies. It will also focus on the particular needs of Indigenous women and look at some programs that have been developed to address them.

To register to participate in the webcast or for program information visit http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/program-1/?program_id=355

The Health Workforce: An Interview with Professor Des Gorman -
pre-recorded satellite broadcast
Tuesday 17th March from 8:00pm AEDT

This is the second program in the Interview series with Professor Des Gorman. Dr Norman Swan interviews Professor Des Gorman on the serious challenges facing the distribution and alignment of health services in Australia. This program will be followed immediately by a repeat broadcast of the first interview, The Doctor of the Future: An Interview with Professor Des Gorman.

Program information can be found by visiting http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/program-1/?program_id=362

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RURAL HEALTH IN THE QUEENSLAND ELECTION

LNP TO REINTRODUCE MATERNITY SERVICES FOR REGIONAL AND RURAL
MOTHERS AND
BABIES

<http://www.lnp.org.au/lnp-media-releases/lnp-state-media-releases/lnp-to-reintroduce-maternity-services-for-regional-and-rural-mothers-and-babies.html>

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Partyline No. 34 is available in hard copy and online - go to <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>, then to Publications, then Partyline. This edition of Partyline, the Newsletter of the National Rural Health Alliance, scrutinises the current range of government reviews and workforce initiatives and looks at future investment in rural health in the light of the current economic environment. In this context Justine Caines reflects on the current Maternity Services Review. There is a piece on Aboriginal health based on Pat Anderson's address at last September's Public Symposium. There is a focus on the 10th National Rural Health Conference in Cairns next year, a beyondblue feature, NRHA news and letters and stories from readers. If you would like to subscribe to Partyline please email your contact details to nrha@ruralhealth.org.au Subscription is free.

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HEALTH RESEARCH POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF POLICY CHANGE IN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH RESEARCH ((Extract from Australian Policy Online, http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=266380)

There is considerable potential for health research to contribute to better health services and programs and improved health outcomes; the policies of health research funding agencies are critical to achieving health gains from research. The need for research to better address health disparities in Indigenous people has been widely recognised. This paper (i) describes the policy changes by NHMRC from 1997 to 2002 to improve funding of Aboriginal health research (ii) examines the catalysts for the policy changes (iii) describes the extent to which this has resulted in new models of research and (iv) outlines issues for Indigenous health policy in the future.

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Join friends of the Alliance now for 2009 and get discounted registration for the 10th Conference in Cairns in May. People who pay the friends fee after 1 September are members for the whole of the following calendar year. friends members will also receive the updated CD 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2009' (due out in late 2009), connection with the Alliance's policy work and regular issues of the Partyline newsletter. Above all, membership of friends gives you the opportunity to support the Alliance and its work. The friends Advisory Committee is: Alicia Eaton (Vic), John Ferguson (Qld), Jane Fisher (ACT), Janet Fletcher (NT), Pauline Glover (SA), Nigel Jefford (WA), Marie Lally (SA), Suzanne Little (Qld), Irene Mills (WA), Beth Smith (TAS), Janie Smith (NSW), Janet Struber (NT), David Templeman (ACT),

David Thompson (Vic) and Robin Toohey (NSW). Members of the Committee are soon to elect a Chairperson, who will be a Member of the NRHA Council.

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AIHW REPORTS

Strong growth in health and community services workforces
Australia's health and community services labour forces are continuing to grow strongly. Between 2001 and 2006 the health workforce increased by almost 23% while the community services workforce grew by 36%. However, for the health workforce there was a fall in supply in very remote areas - there the health workforce supply decreased by 346 workers per 100,000 people (from 1,725 to 1,379). Conversely, there was a rise in the supply of community services workers in very remote areas, from 1,252 to 1,696 workers per 100,000 people.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2009/mr20090306.cfm> and the full publication is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10677>

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LIFELINE INFORMATION SERVICE - 1300 13 11 14

Your Rural Mental Health Information Service Lifeline's Information Service is a rural mental health information service. Information provided includes: referral to services and web sites, printed material and a range of self help resources. The self-help resources focus on practical steps to help promote mental health in a range of areas. For information and copies of resources call or visit

<http://www.lifeline.org.au/infoservice> and further information is available at infoservice@lifeline.org.au and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

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IS THE MEDIA PART OF THE ABORIGINAL HEALTH PROBLEM, AND PART OF THE SOLUTION?

(Extract from Australian Policy Online, http://www.apo.org.au/webboard/comment_results.chtml?filename_num=266663)

Analysis of media coverage of health stories, shows that there are so few stories on Aboriginal health that they don't rate as a major category. Instead Aboriginal health is the thirty-sixth sub-category - just behind wild animal attacks and cosmetic surgery, but ahead of rural health, the forty-eighth sub-category. Common descriptors for the Aboriginal health stories include petrol sniffing, child abuse and alcohol. The full article is at

<http://inside.org.au/part-of-the-aboriginal-health-problem/>

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AUSTRALIAN ORGAN DONOR REGISTER ONLINE

The Australian Organ Donor Register is Australia's only national organ and tissue donor register and serves as a lifeline to the people on the organ transplant waiting lists. Register online at <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/aodr/register.jsp> to be an Australian Organ Donor now!

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A DIGITAL FUTURE FOR AUSTRALIA'S REGIONS

The Rudd Government has announced an additional \$60 million investment in regional communications, including for education, health and emergency services projects, greater access to satellite phones, and an expansion of computer and internet access for remote Indigenous communities. The statement by communications minister Senator Stephen Conroy is at http://www.minister.dbcde.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/010 and the Government's response to the Regional Telecommunications Review report is at <http://www.dbcde.gov.au/regionaltel>

Opposition spokesman, Senator Nick Minchin, described the response as "another attempt by the Government to feign interest in rural and regional telecommunications." His statement is at <http://www.liberal.org.au/news.php?Id=2687>

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BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

Bush Crisis Line is a twenty-four hour confidential telephone support and debriefing service for multi-disciplinary remote and rural health practitioners and their families. It is staffed by qualified psychologists with remote and cross-cultural experience, is toll free and available from anywhere in Australia. For more information <http://www.bushcrisisline.org.au> <<http://www.bushcrisisline.org.au/>>

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WHY HEALTH MATTERS FOR ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The health of a population is a key driver of labour and capital investment and consequent economic growth. Good health can lead to higher gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the long run due to its impact on population; participation; and productivity. Health outcomes are primarily determined by bio-medical, lifestyle and socio-economic factors, but there is evidence that the level of health care resources also affects health outcomes. The efficiency with which

health care resources are used will determine the extent to which health outcomes are enhanced. An article in the latest Commonwealth Treasury's "Round-up" analyses health and its contribution to economic growth and provides a broad framework for the consideration of health care policies. The article is available at http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1496/PDF/05_Why_health_matters.pdf

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NACCHO NEWS

PM's speech uses flawed "evidence" on Aboriginal health
[http://www.naccho.org.au/Files/Documents/09-03-06%20PM%20uses%20flawed%20evidence%20on%20Aboriginal%20health%20-NACCHO%20Media%20Release\(2\).pdf](http://www.naccho.org.au/Files/Documents/09-03-06%20PM%20uses%20flawed%20evidence%20on%20Aboriginal%20health%20-NACCHO%20Media%20Release(2).pdf)

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AIDA NEWS

Submission to the National Primary Health Care Strategy
<http://www.aida.org.au/news.asp?id=45>

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

(See <http://www.abc.net.au/health/healthyliving/yourhealth/ruralregionalhealth/>)

'Hospital embassy' to fight against maternity unit closure
About 40 New South Wales far south coast residents will board a bus bound for State Parliament in Sydney today, to deliver a petition against the closure of Pambula Hospital's maternity unit.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/03/05/2508081.htm>

Hope for college to boost Indigenous health workers
The acting manager of local Indigenous health service, Nola Whyman, says she hopes a new Aboriginal health college will benefit the western New South Wales region.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/03/03/2505838.htm>

Govt appoints new intervention chief
The Federal Government has named Mike Zissler the new head of the Northern Territory emergency response initiative.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/03/02/2505458.htm>

Indigenous Coordinator-General job open for applicants
The Federal Government today begins its search for a leader in its efforts to close the gap on health, education and housing for Indigenous Australians. The Government is advertising the position of Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, to pull together the various initiatives announced during the week.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/28/2503865.htm>

'Bureaucratic maze' hinders Indigenous progress
The Northern Territory Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance says the Closing the Gap initiative will never be successful, if it's run by two different governments.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/27/2503370.htm>

Closing the gap 'report card': must try harder
The first "report card" on efforts to improve the living conditions of Indigenous Australians is in, with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd saying there has been progress in the past 12 months.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/27/2503386.htm>

Springborg unveils regional maternity hospital policy
LNP Leader Lawrence Springborg has released his third health policy in four days, promising to reintroduce maternity services in some small regional hospitals if elected.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/27/2503344.htm>

Calls for inquiry into Aboriginal community food stores
Outback Stores says a quality food store is as essential as police, education and health in remote Aboriginal communities.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/27/2503844.htm>

Govt 'not doing enough' to close the gap: NT groups
Medical, schooling and housing bodies in the Northern Territory have lashed out at the Federal Government's first annual progress report on closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/26/2502576.htm>

Rudd defends progress on closing the gap
Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says there has been progress in closing the living standards gap between Indigenous Australians and the rest of the population in the past year.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/26/2502447.htm>

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RDAA NEWS

Doctors welcome Shadow Minister's rural practice fact-finding visit
5 March 2009

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Peter%20Dutton%20visit%20--%20March%202009.pdf

'Cruel irony' as NSW Government confirms maternity unit shutdown
25 February 2009

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Maternity%20Services%20Review%20report%20--%20February%202009.pdf

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RURAL HEALTH ON THE WEB (From Google Alert, <http://www.googlealert.com>)

State of California Rural Health Policy Council
The mission of the California Rural Health Policy Council (RHPC) is to formulate and establish rural health policy for the State of California
<http://www.oshpd.state.ca.us/RHPC/index.html>

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ARTICLES IN "RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH"

'Why do medical graduates choose rural careers?'
For a fresh look at student selection and the within-course experiences most likely to provide committed rural practitioners, this compact report of a large study by Australia's newest medical school has much to offer.
<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1083>

'Having a baby in the new land: a qualitative exploration of the experiences of Asian migrants in rural Tasmania, Australia'
Asian cultures have developed childbirth customs over thousands of years and these are different from contemporary perinatal care in Australia. This excellent Tasmanian qualitative study helps us understand the perinatal health care likely to be desired by Asian mothers.
<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1084>

'The Royal Flying Doctor Service primary care skin cancer clinic: a pilot program for remote Australia'
People who live in remote areas have a higher rate of melanoma yet a poorer outcome. This pilot study of an Australian Royal Flying Doctor intervention suggests skin cancer care need not be compromised by geographical location.
<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=1048>

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CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA, 2 March 2009
(Available at <http://www.mja.com.au/>)

- From the Editor's Desk: Clinical senators
- Editorials
- Quality of prescribing decision support in primary care: still a work in progress
- Cannabis use in remote Indigenous communities in Australia: endemic yet neglected
- Fertility Matters
- When and how to welcome government to the bedroom
- Perinatal outcomes after assisted reproductive technology treatment in

Australia and New Zealand: single versus double embryo transfer

The impact of the Baby Bonus payment in New South Wales: who is having "one for the country"?

Could the Baby Bonus be a bonus for babies?

Sperm removal and dead or dying patients: a dilemma for emergency departments and intensive care units

Oocyte freezing: timely reproductive insurance?

Infertility Treatment Act or forced sterilisation program?

Health Care - Quality of drug interaction alerts in prescribing and dispensing software

Review - Supraventricular tachycardia

Notable Cases - Spontaneous chylothorax in a 2-year-old child

Viewpoint - Dengue and climate change in Australia: predictions for the future should incorporate knowledge from the past

For Debate - Identifying existing health care services that do not provide value for money

Clinical Update - Oral white lesions: pitfalls of diagnosis

Lessons from Practice - Mycobacterium chelonae infection in a tattoo site

Letters - The rise and fall of suicide in New South Wales

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From: Anthony Watkins
Subject: National Conference on Caring

Carers Queensland are hosting the 2009 National Conference on Caring Building the Future with Family Carers on the 9th and 10th of March 2009 at Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast. The conference will provide the opportunity to come together to exchange and develop knowledge and practice that will enhance carers' health, wellbeing, financial security and choices - now and into the future. Whether you are employed in carer support; disability, health, mental health, aged or community care services; are a policy maker; a researcher or a carer, you will be able to engage with the subjects of interest to you. A stimulating and challenging program has been developed with speakers and presenters including politicians, policy makers, practitioners and, most importantly, carers. You can find out more about the Conference on the official website at <http://www.astmanagement.com.au/Carers9/default.asp> <<http://www.astmanagement.com.au/Carers9/default.asp>>

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From: Al Parmeter
Subject: Community Skills Workshop, Sunday 17 May 2009

The 10th National Rural Health Conference will be held in Cairns 17-20 May 2009. You can find everything you need to know about the Conference on the conference website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

As part of the Conference we are holding some pre-Conference events. One in particular that may interest you or your colleagues is the Community Skills Workshop. This workshop will provide delegates with a range of skills to use in their own communities.

The Workshop on the Sunday is free for 10th Conference delegates, students and those not in the paid workforce.

Registrations can be made online via the Conference website.

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National Palliative Care Week - 24 - 30 May 2009

<http://www.palliativecare.org.au>

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9th WONCA RURAL HEALTH WORLD CONFERENCE

June 12-14, 2009

Heraklion, Crete, Greece

<http://www.ruralwonca2009.org/>

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NAIDOC Week celebrations for 2009 will be held from 5 to 12 July.

Further information at <http://www.naidoc.org.au/>

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Catholic Health Australia 2009 National Conference - Hand in Hand Hotel

Grand Chancellor Hobart, 17 - 19 August 2009 <http://www.cha.org.au/>

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7th Australasian Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care

6-9 September 2009

Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre

Darling Harbour, Sydney

<http://www.aaqhc2009.org.au>

aaqhc2009@tourhosts.com.au

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Year of the Blood Donor 2009

An anticipated doubling of demand for blood and blood products within 10 years has led the Australian Red Cross Blood Service to launch a nationwide recruitment drive in 2009 Year of the Blood Donor. The Blood

Service is appealing for more than 100,000 new blood donors this year, in addition to the 40,000 who registered across Australia to give blood in the week after the Victorian bushfires.

http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/news/Year_of_the_Blood_Donor_2009

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CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is published fortnightly. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator at grovesc@winshop.com.au (do not "reply" to this email - send contributions to grovesc@winshop.com.au). Contributions received by the Friday of publication will be included in the e-forum.

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. As such, the Alliance does not control postings and the contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Alliance. Nor do postings necessarily reflect the view of Jim Groves or any organisation he is associated with. Jim Groves can be contacted at grovesc@winshop.com.au <<mailto:grovesc@winshop.com.au>> Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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Media Release

23 February 2009

Maternity services - another piece of the health reform jigsaw

The Government's report into maternity services represents an important piece of a jigsaw which will show what an improved future health system for Australia might look like. The Alliance strongly supports the development of a collaborative inter-governmental National Maternity Services Plan - especially given the Report's urging that the availability of rural maternity services be a priority issue. Rural health consumers will be among the main beneficiaries.

The Report rightly highlights the fact that that inequality of access and outcomes in maternity care is greatest in rural areas and for Indigenous families. In its own submission to the review, the Alliance called for re-investment in maternity services in rural areas so that some of those closed in recent years can be re-opened.

This theme is taken up in the report through proposals for an expanded range of models of maternity care and support to attract and retain a rural maternity workforce. This will include midwives, procedural GPs and improved access to specialist obstetric care.

In its response the Government will note the report's categorical assertion that: "Current supports and services, including travel and communication, are inadequate to cater for the needs of all women and their families in rural and remote areas". This reminds us of other

pieces of the health reform jigsaw - like the critical need to improve schemes for patient accommodation and travel.

Where overall resourcing of health services in rural and remote areas is concerned, including for maternity care, great hope is attached to the principle enunciated a week ago by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. Its Interim Report proposed that under-serviced areas should receive increased funding based on the national average in payments under Medicare and other primary care benefits, adjusted for remoteness and health need.

The Maternity Services Report shows that it is possible for pregnant women in rural areas to have greater local choices in care, and that it will be a priority to provide special support for the rural maternity services workforce. The midwife population is reasonably well distributed on a per head basis in regional and remote areas, and the Report encourages the Commonwealth to consider new arrangements - including MBS and PBS access - to support their expanded role in collaborative models of maternity care.
