

**NRHA eforum 22 June 2007**

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 22 June 2007

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**MAJOR COMMITMENT WELCOMED - BUT THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY IS NOT CONFINED TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

"A number of the measures announced today by the Howard Government to protect Indigenous children and focus on the situation in remote Aboriginal communities are supported by the National Rural Health Alliance," John Wakerman said tonight from Alice Springs.

"Today's announcement shows just what action can be initiated, and what resources are available, when a national emergency is recognised and political will galvanised," he said. "Several of the detailed proposals look very positive, whilst some of the proposals are lacking in important detail. But whatever challenges there may be in implementation of the plans, they show leadership," Dr Wakerman said.

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8> and is reprinted below.

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From: Dr S Couzos  
Subject: Memo from NACCHO: child health checks in the NT under the Howard Plan for child sexual abuse

The NACCHO Executive has asked that this message be sent. Please forward to your contacts.

The Howard Government has announced a plan where "scores of doctors will be drafted to examine all 23,000-plus indigenous children in the Territory aged under 16 for evidence of sexual abuse".

Under COAG, a program for the implementation of an accelerated child health check has been underway since first discussed in late November 2006 following an Intergovernmental Summit on Child Abuse in Indigenous Communities. The accelerated child health check program is a trial involving teams of GPs and nurses to be recruited to provide 2000 Aboriginal children with child health checks in 10 remote Aboriginal communities with established primary health care services. The roll-out of this trial has so far found that most services wish to adopt a 'backfill model' of recruitment where their local GPs (who have the skills and knowledge of the community) undertake the child checks rather than the other way around.

This is no surprise. The introduction of a broader program of child health checks for all Aboriginal children in the NT that concentrates on sexual health checks is disturbing. Some of the concerns have already been reported from the medical profession, such as the AMA in the NT, citing the workforce issues and the cultural sensitivities in implementing such a scheme.

Moreover, returning to the original NT Inquiry ("Little Children Are Sacred") to which this proposal is a response, the Inquiry recommends the following health responses:

"Home visiting programs; increased health centre focus on maternity, prenatal and early childhood support; increased health services capacity to deliver the focus by increasing support for PHCAP; increased primary health care training; using primary health care services as "hubs" for integrated health and welfare responses in remote communities; and in consultation with Aboriginal communities and organizations, that programs to address the underlying effects of 'intergenerational' trauma be developed to enhance emotional and social well-being.

The Inquiry did not recommend widespread sexual health checks (screening) of all Aboriginal children as proposed by the Howard Government.

NACCHO recommends that any governmental response that involves the health sector must proceed only after there has been consultation and support gained from Aboriginal communities and organizations. We invite the Government and all health

bodies to engage with NACCHO prior to endorsing or supporting the Australian Governments proposals for screening all Aboriginal children under 16 years in the NT.

Please make contact with Ms Dea Thiele, CEO NACCHO on 0417046692, in order to ensure there is an evidence-based, and responsibly sensitive health sector response to proposals from the Australian government.

Kind regards  
(on behalf of Ms Dea Thiele)  
Dr Sophie Couzos  
FRACGP FACRRM FAFPHM  
Public Health Officer  
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation  
20 Cleveland Terrace, Townsville, Qld 4810  
07 47240059 (P/F) 0417178514 (M)

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#### OTHER REACTION ON INDIGENOUS CHILD ABUSE

The statement announcing the Government's initiative is at [http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/Minister3.nsf/content/emergency\\_21june07.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/Minister3.nsf/content/emergency_21june07.htm). Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough has also announced a hotline for those seeking further information. The number is 1800 333 995; those with relevant skills (such as medical or law enforcement) willing to volunteer their services should call 02 6243 4855 during business hours or email their CVs to [jointaskforce@facsia.gov.au](mailto:jointaskforce@facsia.gov.au)

The Prime Minister's opening address to the Press Conference announcing the reforms is at <http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2007/Interview24380.cfm>

The Federal Opposition Labor's has offered bipartisan, in principle support because, according to Indigenous Affairs spokesperson Jenny Macklin, "we do think these are very, very serious levels of abuse and neglect." Ms Maclin's statement is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0607/dsiia220.php>. The comments by Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd are at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0607/msloo210.php>

The Indigenous Doctors Association cautioned against the rushed approach that has not included consultation with Indigenous people or the medical community. The AIDA statement is at [http://www.aida.org.au/res/File/Press%20releases/NT\\_Measures.pdf](http://www.aida.org.au/res/File/Press%20releases/NT_Measures.pdf)

The Council of Remote Area Nurses said that the announcement is "long overdue" and has "stunned" the remote area nursing workforce. The CRANA statement is at <http://www.crana.org.au/n.php>

Reconciliation welcomed the sense of urgency reflected in the Government's announcement. Its statement is at <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/i-cms.isp?page=552>

The AMA has welcomed the Government's initiative, describing it as "an important step in closing the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians." The AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-74EBPY>

The Social Justice Commissioner has welcomed the initiative. However, he said that his concern with the federal Government's proposal is that it doesn't put in place the preventative measures that Indigenous people need to stop the violence, and then prevent it from re-occurring. He said that "the stakes are great and protecting our children is of paramount importance, but there are many potentially adverse consequences of implementing a quick response to a complex social problem without wide-spread consultation with the communities and their leaders and practitioners who can provide professional advice and guidance." His statement is at [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/media\\_releases/2007/44\\_07.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/media_releases/2007/44_07.html)

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#### TIME FOR SPECIAL ACTION ON DRUGS IN RURAL AREAS

During Drug Action Week (18-22 June), the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) will be promoting ways to reduce harm from the use of alcohol and other drugs. It will be an opportune time to focus on the greater consequences experienced by people in remote areas as a result of drug misuse. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8> and is reprinted below.

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#### BROADBAND PLAN

The Federal Government has announced a "Broadband Connect" initiative ". To be delivered by OPEL, a consortium of Optus and Elders, the initiative will target underserved areas of rural and regional Australia with a combination of high speed WiMAX wireless broadband, ADSL 2+ and new fibre backhaul, offering speeds of 12 mbps by June 2009 at national retail prices of between \$35 and \$60 per month. The network will be funded by \$600 million from the Government's Broadband Connect, a further \$358 million Government investment and a matching commitment from Optus and Elders of \$917 million. The statement by the Minister for Transport and Regional Services Mark Vaile is at [http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au/mv/releases/2007/June/097MV\\_2007.htm](http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au/mv/releases/2007/June/097MV_2007.htm)

However, the Federal Opposition said that the Government's announcement represents a two-tiered, two-class system of broadband. According to Communications spokesperson Stephen Conroy, "If you live in one of the five capital cities you are going to get true broadband, if you live in the outer metropolitan areas, if you live in regional Australia or rural Australia you are going to be locked into a second-class service delivered by wireless." Senator Conroy's statement is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0607/dsicoit190.php>

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has welcomed the Government's

announcement that high speed broadband will be available to 99 per cent of Australians within the next two years, saying the move has real potential to improve access to tele-health services in the bush. The RDAA statement is at [http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/Broadband%20plan%20-%20real%20potential%20to%20improve%20rural%20health%20--%20June%202007.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Broadband%20plan%20-%20real%20potential%20to%20improve%20rural%20health%20--%20June%202007.pdf)

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## REFUGEES IN RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

World Refugee Day (20 June) recognises the indomitable spirit and courage of the world's refugees, and provides an opportunity for their voices to be heard in the communities in which they are rebuilding their lives. The often oppressive, violent and dangerous experiences faced by many refugees can take a heavy toll on health. For those who settle in rural or remote areas, this situation is compounded by the fact that health services there are less accessible and more expensive than in the major cities.

These are some of the issues that will be discussed at a Public Seminar on the health and wellbeing of refugees in rural and remote areas, to be held on 7 August at the Australian War Memorial (1.15-5.00pm).

The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/refugee%20day.pdf> and is reprinted below.

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## HREF NEWS

The Rural Health Education Foundation's program on Chlamydia that was broadcast in March 2007 is now available on DVD or video free. The program alerts health practitioners (General Practitioners, nurses, allied health workers, and Aboriginal Health Workers who are in the front-line to combating this epidemic) to the high and increasing prevalence of Chlamydia and the need to take appropriate measures. It aims to facilitate health professionals in asking sexual health questions, discussing preventative measures, and performing Chlamydia screening and treatment. Program participants include Professor Frank Bowden, Dr Chris Bourne, Dr Miriam Grotowski, and Ms Annette Slater with Dr Norman Swan facilitating the discussion. For further information about receiving this resource go to <http://www.rhef.com.au>

To order your free DVD or VHS video copy of Chlamydia: Combating the Epidemic (one per person or organisation only within Australia), please email us at [chlamydia@rhef.com.au](mailto:chlamydia@rhef.com.au); or fax us on (02) 6232-5484 specifying your preferred format and providing your name, organisation, postal address, contact telephone number and email address. Note that the number of copies is limited so place your order quickly. The production and distribution of this program was generously funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

The Rural Health Education Foundation has several DVD or video resources currently available for free. The programs are: Chlamydia:

- \* **Combating the Epidemic** - This program alerts health practitioners to the high and increasing prevalence of Chlamydia and the need to take appropriate measures. It aims to facilitate health professionals in asking sexual health questions, discussing preventative measures, and performing Chlamydia screening and treatment.
- \* **Psychiatric Emergencies** - a program focussing on Australian youth, the onset of disorders such as bipolar disease and schizophrenia, the incidence of substance misuse as a co-morbidity factor, and appropriate management strategies for rural and remote patients, carers and health professionals involved in the management of a mental health emergency.
- \* **Better Access to Mental Health Care** - a program exploring the Better Access Initiative and discussing what it means for the General Practitioners, paediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists who assist people with mental health disorders. It includes practical case studies.
- \* **Multiple Sclerosis** - this program explores the current debate over treatment modalities, and provides an update on the latest research and clinical expertise in the areas of diagnosis, treatment and management, as well as resources and services relevant to rural clinical practice.

To order your free copy of any of the above resources visit the Foundation website <http://www.rhef.com.au>

#### Health and Medical Education Project Officer

Do you want to be part of a dynamic and growing team? Do you have a strong background in health and medical education? Do you want a career with a national focus? The Rural Health Education Foundation is seeking a dynamic, experienced Health and Medical Education Project Officer to work with us on the development and production of a wide range of professional development television projects for rural and remote health professionals. This full-time position is located in the Foundation's Canberra office.

Working as part of a team, you will have the opportunity to use your experience in health and medical education and clinical practice and your excellent research and project management skills to organise, create, produce, distribute and evaluate our programs. You will liaise with program partners, expert medical panel members and television production personnel. Salary \$75,000 plus superannuation (neg); health promotion charity salary packaging is also available. Please check our website <http://www.rhef.com.au> Closing date: Friday 6th July 2007 Selection criteria and application information:

Amanda Little Deputy CEO, Director of Education Rural Health Education Foundation PO Box 324 Curtin ACT 2605 [network@rhef.com.au](mailto:network@rhef.com.au) tel. (02) 6232 5480

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## ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

Help fight poverty and hardship in Australia and overseas. Organise an activity during the Week - big or small, local or national. FOR INFO & IDEAS, see <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au> OR CONTACT US AT 1300 797 290; or [apw@antipovertyweek.org.au](mailto:apw@antipovertyweek.org.au)

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## STARLIGHT CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

Since 1988 Starlight Children's Foundation has been brightening the lives of children and young people living with a serious illness or chronic health condition. Starlight provides a range of state of the art entertainment and positive distraction programs that aim to restore the fun, laughter and joy that living with a serious illness can often take away. With the financial support of The Macquarie Bank Foundation, we are currently undertaking a major study to develop new regional program models that will help us extend our reach to children, young people and families living in regional, rural and remote Australia. Over the next two months we will be meeting with families, health professionals, researchers and other experts from around Australia and asking them to help us look at ways we might brighten the lives of families living with a serious illness in regional, rural and remote Australia. We hope to begin implementing these new models by the end of 2007. For further information, or to be placed on our mailing list to receive regular updates about this project, please contact Felicity McMahan, Regional Needs Analysis Project Manager, on (03) 9663 3300 or [felicity.mcmahan@starlight.org.au](mailto:felicity.mcmahan@starlight.org.au)

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## UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, SCHOOL OF RURAL HEALTH, 2007 RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The University of Melbourne, School of Rural Health, invites you to participate in the 3rd Annual Shepparton Research Conference on Tuesday 27th November 2007 from 9am to 5pm.

The research conference, entitled: "Moving Forward: Rural Research & Knowledge Transfer" is intended for individuals and organisations with an interest in rural health, including general practice, primary health care, integrated care and population health, research and evaluation. Registrations open 2 July 2007. Delegates can register online by accessing the School of Rural health website <http://www.ruralhealth.unimelb.edu.au> and clicking on the conference link after that date. A hardcopy of the registration pack can be obtained by emailing the Conference Secretariat from the 6th July 2007.

The School of Rural Health welcomes your participation with papers, posters and other presentations at this forthcoming conference. The call for Abstracts is now open and must be submitted via email to the Conference Secretariat by close of business Monday 3rd September, 2007. Please circulate to colleagues interested in research.

Pauline Venn Conference Secretariat pven@unimelb.edu.au Ph: 03 5823 4532

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## 9TH NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The National Rural Health Alliance has published on its website (<http://9thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/registration/?IntCatId=2> ) the full set of 250 recommendations from delegates at the 9th National Rural Health Conference held in Albury in March.

Media Statements from the Conference are as follows:

- \* From the 9th Conference: plans for rural and remote health -  
[http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/9th%20conf\\_plans%20for%20rr%20health%2015%20march.pdf](http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/9th%20conf_plans%20for%20rr%20health%2015%20march.pdf)
- \* 9th Conference: the rural health sector recommits to action -  
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/conference%20media%20with%20communique%20and%20recs%2015%20march.pdf>
- \* Good health - not just about giving up smoking and taking up exercise -  
[http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/good%20health%20\\_%20smoking%20and%20exercise.pdf](http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/good%20health%20_%20smoking%20and%20exercise.pdf)
- \* Top Performers in Rural Health Care Honoured -  
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/top%20rural%20health%20performers%20%20honoured.pdf>
- \* Grumpy old men perform secret men's business - and more - in Men's Sheds -  
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/grumpy%20old%20men.pdf>
- \* Country Australians deserve an equal share in Australia's wealth -  
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/8%20march%20country%20australians%20deserve%20equal%20share.pdf>
- \* Health Reform, Health Professionals and Service Planning -  
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20health%20reform%20health%20professionals%20day%202%20%207%20march%20071.pdf>
- \* Rural Health - It's All Happening in Albury at opening of 9th National Rural Health Conference -  
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20media%20notification%207%20%20march%20nrh%20conference.pdf>

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ARRWAG INDIGENOUS HEALTH WORKFORCE FORUM ON 31 AUGUST  
2007

Australian Rural and Remote Workforce Agencies Group

2007 National Policy Forum on Indigenous Health Workforce Issues  
FREMANTLE, WA, 31 AUGUST 2007

Contact:

Ph: 03 9662 2625

Fax: 03 9662 4830

Email: [forum@arrwag.com.au](mailto:forum@arrwag.com.au)

<http://www.arrwag.com.au>

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Manuscript submissions to The Australian Journal of Rural Health can now be made online through Manuscript Central. Easy and fast submission process; track the progress of your article at any time; safe and secure site. Simply log on to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ajrh> to submit your manuscript today and share the wealth of your knowledge. Full author instructions and guidelines can be found at the AJRH homepage - <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr>

The June 2007 issue of the journal is available online now at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/toc/ajr>. Articles include:

- \* Establishing a rural academic infrastructure for individual health professions
- \* Growing old and getting sick: Maintaining a positive spirit at the end of life
- \* Building sustainable rural research capacity: The experiences of a brain injury rehabilitation service
- \* Evaluation of the national pharmacy preceptor education program
- \* Can a rural community-based work-related activity program make a difference for chronic pain-disabled injured workers?
- \* Benefits and challenges of providing transitional rehabilitation services to people with spinal cord injury from regional, rural and remote locations
- \* Junior medical officer recruitment: Challenges and lessons from the Northern Territory
- \* Diagnosing dementia in rural New South Wales
- \* Trends in private dental service provision in major city and other Australian locations
- \* Australian rural adolescents' experiences of accessing psychological help for a mental health problem
- \* Depression and remoteness from health services in South Australia
- \* Prevalence of depression among adults in Oyo State, Nigeria: A comparative study of rural and urban communities
- \* Short Reports
- \* Grazings
- \* From the Journal Associates

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## SA COUNTRY HEALTH PLAN

The South Australian Government has announced that it will develop a detailed plan for country health services in South Australia over coming months aimed at improving the system - not downgrading it. Health Minister John Hill has said that the State Government is also committing a \$100 million of capital works in country areas, including major health service upgrades in Ceduna and Port Pirie.

"We will build up four key country hospitals, at Berri, Whyalla, Mount Gambier and Port Lincoln so they are able to provide more services. Through the development of our Country Health Care Plan we will also examine all health services provided in the country and we will develop strategies with country communities to ensure that that good health services can be accessed by all country South Australians.

Mr Hill's statement is at

<http://www.health.sa.gov.au/Default.aspx?tabid=52&mid=449&ctl=ViewDetails&ItemID=1699&PageIndex=0>

However, the Rural Doctors' Association of South Australia said the State Government plans to strip \$30 million from rural health services. The RDASA statement is at <http://www.rdasa.com.au/>

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Join friends of the Alliance in 2007. By joining friends you will receive the updated CD 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2007', a 2007 friends certificate, and regular issues of PARTYline newsletter. Membership of friends would also give you the opportunity to be involved more closely with the Alliance's information dissemination and policy work. You will become part of a group of people who contribute to and support the work of the National Rural Health Alliance.

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## OBSTETRICIAN LOCUM RELIEF PILOT EXTENDED

Health Minister Tony Abbott said the pilot of the Specialist Obstetrician Locum Scheme, which has helped to place and maintain obstetricians and gynaecologists in rural and remote areas by providing subsidised locum support, has been extended until September 2008. The locum scheme has proven successful since its launch in July 2006, with 20 obstetricians placed in areas including Wagga Wagga, Kalgoorlie, Warrnambool, Goulburn, Nowra, Derby, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Gladstone and Sale. The Commonwealth Government will provide more than \$500,000 to the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia to continue the pilot scheme. Mr Abbott's statement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-ta-abb077.htm>

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## GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS "SERIOUSLY FLAWED"

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma has called on the federal Government to address serious flaws in their Indigenous affairs programs and services. "It is clear to me that there are serious problems with the federal Government's new whole-of-government arrangements in Indigenous affairs. The government has promised much in the way of accountability and progress on Indigenous issues, but has little to show for this over the three years since it abolished ATSIC," Commissioner Calma said. The Social Justice Commissioner's latest Social Justice Report has been tabled in federal Parliament. The report, produced annually, considers the impact of government activity on the exercise and enjoyment of Indigenous people's human rights. Details are at [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_justice/sjreport06/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sjreport06/index.html)

However, Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough has expressed disappointment with the Report, saying that the report simply doesn't do justice to what's being achieved through reforms of Indigenous affairs since 2004. His statement is at [http://www.facsia.gov.au/Internet/Minister3.nsf/content/clama\\_14jun07.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/Internet/Minister3.nsf/content/clama_14jun07.htm)

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## PARTYline Newsletter

The Alliance's newsletter, PARTYline, is a means of exchanging information between those with an interest in rural health, including friends of the Alliance, health consumers, health professionals, students and policy makers. Contributors report on their personal rural experiences, on programs with which they have been involved, provide information on new initiatives and resources, and it is a vehicle for opinions on rural health issues and events.

PARTYline has a print circulation around Australia of 13,000 and is also available on-line below. PARTYline readily accepts contributions from readers - articles (up to 500 words) and photographs can be sent to [partyline@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:partyline@ruralhealth.org.au)

Partyline Edition 30 includes:

- \* highlights from the 9th National Rural Health Conference, including reviews of keynote addresses, in-depth discussion of health reform, the role of the arts in achieving good health, impressions from delegates, student voices, policy impact of recommendations, rural health winners, and pictorial highlights
- \* equal health within a generation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- \* responses to Budget 2007-08
- \* writing for publication
- \* telling your rural health story
- \* rural health news
- \* resources
- \* dates for your calendar.

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## AIHW REPORT: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2006 REPORT: DETAILED ANALYSES

This report contains detailed analyses underlying the summary data presented in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2006 report. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework (HPF) is designed to provide the basis to monitor the impact of the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (NSFATSH) and inform policy analyses, planning and program implementation. The HPF consists of 70 measures covering three Tiers - health status and outcomes, determinants of health and health systems performance. Details at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10429>

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LIFELINE'S JUST ASK - 1 300 13 11 14

### Your Rural Mental Health Information Service

Lifeline's Just ask 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.justask.org.au> and further information is available at [national@lifeline.org.au](mailto:national@lifeline.org.au) and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

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## NEW ARTICLES IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

### 'Continuing medical education as a map to guide rural physicians'

Continuing medical education might be about professional growth but, in retaining rural health professionals, this commentary suggests that addressing needs is more than just addressing CME.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=775>

### 'Education, training and support needs of Australian trained doctors and international medical graduates in rural Australia: a case of special needs?'

What are the education, training and support needs of Australian medical graduates and international medical graduates in rural practice. This small study from rural New South Wales has some surprising findings.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=681>

### 'Improving access to medicines in urban, regional and rural Aboriginal communities - is expansion of Section 100 the answer?'

This article highlights Australian Aboriginal people's high rates of disease and mortality but low use of prescription medications. Explored as a potential solution to this low access to medication is the expansion of the special S100 scheme of the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits. Crucial to including Aboriginal medical services and Aboriginal health workers in this scheme will be the input of pharmacists.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=738>

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### DRUG ACTION WEEK - FUTURE FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

A collective approach to tackling drug and alcohol abuse was vital to improving the health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Minister responsible for illicit drug policy, Christopher Pyne, said on 21 June, the fourth day of Drug Action Week 2007. The full text of Mr Pyne's statement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-cp-pyn071.htm>

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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>

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### GOVERNMENT 'BURIES' REPORT ON RURAL RETENTION PROGRAM - AMA

AMA President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, has urged the Government to urgently implement recommendations to support and bolster Australia's rural medical workforce, which are contained in a Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) report that has been 'buried' for more than six months. The report, "Review of the Rural Retention Program", was completed last year but has not yet been publicly released. The AMA has obtained the report under Freedom of Information provisions. Dr Capolingua said it is surprising with the critical shortage of rural and regional doctors that the Government would delay introducing measures to retain doctors in country towns and attract a new generation of GPs to join them. The full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-7462PZ>

The Rural Doctors Association says that the AMA claim shows the need for immediate action to fix the rural doctor shortage. The RDAA statement is at [http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded\\_documents/Broadband%20plan%20-%20real%20potential%20to%20improve%20rural%20health%20-%20June%202007.pdf](http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Broadband%20plan%20-%20real%20potential%20to%20improve%20rural%20health%20-%20June%202007.pdf)

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### RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

(From ABC Rural Newsletter, <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/default.htm> and Health Updates, <http://www.abc.net.au/health/maillinglist.htm>)

**SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT EMERGE FROM NT COMMUNITIES (7.30 Report: 18/06/2007)**

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s1954848.htm>

Child abuse response not racist, says Indigenous leader  
The chairwoman of the National Indigenous Council, Sue Gordon, has defended the Federal Government's plans to take control of Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/06/23/1959803.htm?section=justin>

**Vic Indigenous communities 'face similar problems' as NT**

A peak Indigenous health body says Aboriginal communities in Victoria are facing the same drug, alcohol and child abuse problems as those in the Northern Territory.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/06/23/1959844.htm?section=justin>

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From: Kasy Chambers

Subject: Useful report - Effects of Health and Education on Labour Force Participation

**Key points**

\* This paper provides new estimates of the effects, on the probability of participation in the labour force, of changes in the prevalence of health conditions or changes in educational attainment levels.

\* The research confirms that better health and education can result in substantially greater labour force participation for those affected:

- Of the six health conditions identified, a mental health or nervous condition, when averted, has the largest positive impact on labour force participation.

- Having a degree or higher qualification has the largest impact on labour force participation, relative to not completing Year 12.

\* Results suggest that unobserved characteristics affect decisions to participate in the labour force; and health and labour force participation influence each other simultaneously.

The full report is available at

<http://www.pc.gov.au/research/swp/healthandeducation/index.html>

Kasy Chambers

National Manager Communications and Government Relations

UnitingCare Australia

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**AHCRA National Health Reform Summit 2007**

The Australian Health Care Reform Alliance is holding a National Health Reform

Summit 'Reform in the Australian Health Sector' on 30-31 July 2007 in Canberra.  
Program and online registration are available at <http://www.healthreform.org.au/>

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From: Jane Howorth - ECC Information Desk  
Subject: Update on Rural Critical Care Conference

The 2007 Rural Critical Care Conference is taking place in Ballina NSW, 24 - 25 August. Special 'early' registration rates are available up to 15 June 2007.

Further info is available on the conference website <http://www.ruralcriticalcare.asn.au>

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From: Joy Burch  
Subject: 2007 Mount Isa Remote Health Conference 24-26 August 2007

Every two years Mount Isa hosts a conference aimed at bringing together people with an interest in all aspects of health in remote Australia. Previous events in 2003 and 2005 were immensely successful with attendees finding the presentations 'focussed and relevant' and many going on to indicate their willingness to attend again.

The purpose of this year's event is to provide a forum for information exchange and debate about issues relevant to remote health with a particular focus on the following themes:

- \* Clinical practice in remote areas;
- \* Population Health including Indigenous health;
- \* Workforce supply, education and training;
- \* Research outcomes such as innovation in health service delivery.

This conference is convened by the Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including, Queensland Health, the Royal Flying Doctors Service, James Cook University, Oxfam, North and West Queensland Primary Health Care and the Mount Isa City Council. Through involvement of such a wide range of remote health organisations the multidisciplinary nature of this conference is assured.

Once again the Mount Isa Remote Health Conference promises to be a fantastic event and, through its small size and limited registrations, represents a great opportunity to establish networks with other remote health professionals.

Details are available at <http://micrrh.jcu.edu.au/conferences-workshops/remotely-interested/>

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journal: <http://www.rrh.org.au>

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From: Nicky Reavell  
Subject: 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference

### Partners Across the Lifespan

Palliative Care Victoria in conjunction with Palliative Care Australia is hosting the 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference. It will take place at the Melbourne Convention Centre, Victoria Australia from Tuesday 28 to Friday 31 August 2007. The conference website is <http://www.iceaustralia.com/apcc2007>

Palliative Care Australia  
PO Box 24  
Deakin West ACT 2600  
Ph: +61 2 6232 4433  
Fax: +61 2 6232 4434  
<http://www.pallcare.org.au>

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### THE LIME CONNECTION II "CULTURES ACROSS THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH SPECTRUM: ACHIEVING BETTER OUTCOMES"

The Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) and the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) announces The LIME Connection II conference, held in Sydney from Sunday 23rd to Tuesday 25th September, 2007.

Leaders in the field of Indigenous medical education and practice will present their experiences and share innovative approaches through a mix of keynote addresses, oral and poster presentations, group discussions and a public lecture. Topics will include:

- \* reviewing medical schools' progress towards implementing the curriculum framework and Indigenous student initiatives
- \* learning and sharing with other health science disciplines, postgraduate medical education bodies, medical colleges and divisions
- \* defining cultural safety in Australian health and medical education
- \* looking toward the future to examine what's possible and where we go from here

For further information, please visit the LIME Connection II web site at <http://www.limenetwork.net.au/conference/welcome>

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From: Michael Blair

Subject: Australian College of Mental Health Nurses 33rd Annual International Conference

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is to hold its 33rd Annual Conference in Cairns in 2007.

The theme for the conference, "Mental Health Nurses: Making Waves", not only illustrates the tropical location of the 2007 conference, it is also intended to reflect the idea that historically derived factors influencing development in Mental Health Nursing, reach out and influence others with related concerns.

Waves convey ideas of movement and change. History evolves as events change. Its influence on the future changes with developments that are based on the lessons learnt and experienced. As a wave rolls through, its predecessor is completely changed and yet waves are comprised of those that have come before. Our theme challenges presenters to address related topics. We know that mental health issues will remain important to communities and individuals in the years and decades to come. Mental health nursing is challenged to make waves and to be a key player in this expanding sphere.

The ACMHN Inc., through its national Conferences, local seminars, educational functions, scholarships and awards, has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with key sponsors. We hope that existing sponsors will take this opportunity to continue a mutually rewarding relationship, and that new groups will be inspired to join us.

The Web site URL for persons to express an interest in attending or sponsoring the conference is <http://www.astmanagement.com.au/anzcmhc7/>

All those persons that express an interest in attending via the web site will go into the draw for a free registration to the conference.

The conference will be held at the International Hotel in Cairns from the 8th to the 12th of October 2007.

For further information contact:  
Mick Blair  
Co-convenor  
ACMHN Inc. 33rd International Conference 2007

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From: Scott Wagner  
Subject: NSW Rural Allied Health Conference 2007, Dubbo, October 18-19

Details are at <http://www.nswrahc.com>.

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From: Jane Howorth - ECC Information Desk

Subject: NSW Rural Mental Health Conference

This year's NSW Rural Mental Health Conference is taking place in Batemans Bay, 3 - 5 December 2007, hosted by the Greater Southern Area Health Service. Closing date for abstracts is 15 June.

Further information on the conference website: <http://www.rmhconference.com> or by contacting [info@eastcoastconferences.com.au](mailto:info@eastcoastconferences.com.au), tel 02 6650 9800.

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From: Mcalpin, Susan  
Subject: International Rural Network World Rural Forum

The International Rural Network World Rural Forum, India, Late Jan-Early Feb 2008: Innovation for Sustainable Local Development.

The main focus of the Forum will be on innovation in education, health, resource management, governance, and sustainable development to improve the quality of life of rural people and reduce rural poverty and social exclusion.

The forum will be based in the beautiful rural town of Udaipur, Rajasthan, which is also the home of IRN Board Member Lakshmi Murthy.

The Forum will involve five days, with at least one day (or equivalent) in local field visits to see the relevant work of NGOs etc. There are likely to be optional additional visits after the Forum either to the famous Institute of Rural Management in Anand, Gujarat and/or to the equally famous Birla Institute of Technology in Pilani, Rajasthan.

The date of the conference will be around the end of January or beginning of February 2008. If you are interested, please check out our website at <http://www.International-Rural-Network.org> and email [Nicola.swan@btinternet.com](mailto:Nicola.swan@btinternet.com) to register your interest in keeping informed as soon as possible.

Poverty and disadvantage is a common feature of rural areas and people across the world. This is explicitly recognised in the UN Millennium Development Goals. By providing a global forum for academics, practitioners, NGOs and policy makers concerned with sustainable rural development, education and health, the IRN aims to stimulate exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas, and create regional and global support networks. In this way it helps to develop a storehouse of knowledge and expertise on rural concerns, and to raise the profile and policy impacts of rural people, their NGOs and other organisations aiming for local empowerment, engagement, and supporting activities including policies.

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From: Emma Grayson  
Subject: 10th International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference

The 10<sup>th</sup> International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference is to be held at the Holiday Inn Esplanade and Darwin Entertainment Centre, Northern Territory, from Wednesday, 30 April to Friday, 2 May 2008. The conference is being hosted by the Australian Confederation of Paediatric and Child Health Nurses. The conference is expected to attract between 200 and 400 delegates from across Australia and abroad.

Through the implementation of the theme "Crossing barriers", this conference aims to illustrate that barriers can and must be crossed to improve health outcomes for children and young people. The conference aims are: to advance paediatric and child health nursing's contribution to health care and facilitate the dissemination of evidence highlighting effective nursing interventions to arise the profile of the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration to identify future directions for paediatric and child health nursing to provide a forum that stimulates debate and collegiality.

For more information, to register your expression of interest or to download the call for abstracts, please visit the conference website at <http://www.ipchnconference.com.au> or by contacting the conference secretariat via email at [info@ipchnconference.com.au](mailto:info@ipchnconference.com.au) or by telephone +61 7 3858 5503.

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**POPULATION HEALTH CONGRESS 2008**  
A Global World - Practical action for health and Well-being

Come to Brisbane and join in Australia's population health event of the decade. Four organisations are working together to provide a line-up of international and national speakers that promises to be excellent.

As well as an exciting range of speakers, this congress will have major trade displays for companies and products which will have a significant future role in addressing governmental and individual lifestyle responses to environmental and nutritional issues.

The Population health Congress 2008 will be held on July 7-9 in the Brisbane Convention and exhibition Centre - one of Australia's best conference venues.

Regular updates on Congress 2008 will be available at <http://www.populationhealthcongress.org.au> log on to register your interest.

Enquiries:  
Conference Coordinators  
PO Box 139  
Calwe ll ACt 2905  
Ph (02) 6292 9000  
[congress2008@confco.com.au](mailto:congress2008@confco.com.au)

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## CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator at [grovesc@winshop.com.au](mailto:grovesc@winshop.com.au) (do not "reply" to this email - send contributions to [grovesc@winshop.com.au](mailto:grovesc@winshop.com.au)).

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  
17 June 2007

Time for special action on drugs in rural areas

During Drug Action Week (18-22 June), the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA) will be promoting ways to reduce harm from the use of alcohol and other drugs. It will be an opportune time to focus on the greater consequences experienced by people in remote areas as a result of drug misuse.

The misuse of alcohol plays a significant role in a wide range of injuries, including those from road and machinery accidents, falls, burns and drownings. More than half the nation's road accidents occur on rural open roads and in rural towns. Two thirds of fatalities on rural roads are rural people, most of them killed within five kilometers of home.

The consequences of drug-related accident and injury are more severe in rural and remote areas for a number of reasons. Response times for emergency personnel are greater. Emergency treatment centres are further away, as are services for follow-up or rehabilitative care when needed. Access to health care generally is more expensive in rural and remote areas where the population is also less well-off than in the cities.

Added to this, there appears to be stronger allegiance in rural areas to the stereotypical image of a male as a hard drinker and a risk taker. Also, drink driving campaigns and random breath testing are less effective in rural areas due to the difficulties of communicating mass messages, and the lower visibility of enforcement officers.

Substance misuse is a particular issue for some Indigenous communities.

Campaigns on driving should promote positive actions that can be adopted to avoid drink/dope driving, or driving with a drink/doped driver, and should begin in schools. Messages based on abstinence are unlikely to be effective.

The Australian Government should undertake a review of the alcohol taxation system

with a view to reducing harm from alcohol. Because foetal alcohol syndrome is such a significant but preventable cause of developmental and behavioural problems in children, it is important that women and their families in rural and remote areas receive the same education on the dangers of drinking during pregnancy as is available to people in city areas.

Go to <http://www.drugactionweek.org.au> and check the National Calendar of Events to find out what Drug Action Week activities you can attend in your area.

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### Refugees in rural and remote Australia, 19 June 2007

World Refugee Day (20 June) recognises the indomitable spirit and courage of the world's refugees, and provides an opportunity for their voices to be heard in the communities in which they are rebuilding their lives.

The often oppressive, violent and dangerous experiences faced by many refugees can take a heavy toll on health. For those who settle in rural or remote areas, this situation is compounded by the fact that health services there are less accessible and more expensive than in the major cities. There are also financial, language and cultural barriers to be overcome in managing their health needs and isolation.

These are some of the issues that will be discussed at a Public Seminar on the health and wellbeing of refugees in rural and remote areas, to be held on 7 August at the Australian War Memorial (1.15-5.00pm). The Seminar will highlight the challenges faced by refugees in rural and remote areas and the positive steps being taken to support them.

The Seminar will be opened by John Wakerman, Chairperson of the NRHA. A spokesperson for the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) will provide demographic and health details on refugees and migrants living in rural and remote Australia. Daniel Boyer, from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, will outline government services to assist refugees settling in regional areas. The health of refugee children will be the particular focus of Dr Mitchell Smith, a member of the Royal Australasian College Physicians Working Party on Refugee Health.

A panel of three - Dr Mitchell Smith (NSW Refugee Health Service), Dr Geraldine Duncan (GP from Wagga Wagga) and Dr Penny Vine (trauma counsellor, Albury) - will present case studies on providing health and counselling services to refugees in rural areas. Dr Helen McCue, co-founder of Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR), will discuss RAR as a case study in community support for refugees.

The Public Seminar will conclude with a session on effective follow-up activities and an examination of various approaches to helping new settlers in rural areas, including views on current funding arrangements.

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Media Release  
21 June 2007

Major commitment welcomed - but the national emergency is not confined to child sexual abuse

"A number of the measures announced today by the Howard Government to protect Indigenous children and focus on the situation in remote Aboriginal communities are supported by the National Rural Health Alliance," John Wakerman said tonight from Alice Springs.

"Today's announcement shows just what action can be initiated, and what resources are available, when a national emergency is recognised and political will galvanised," he said. "Several of the detailed proposals look very positive, whilst some of the proposals are lacking in important detail. But whatever challenges there may be in implementation of the plans, they show leadership," Dr Wakerman said.

"It will now be critical to work with Aboriginal people and organisations in the communities concerned on roll-out of the proposals. There needs to be a balance between enforcement and control on one hand; and encouragement and development on the other."

This announcement will be another test of the ability of the Commonwealth, States and Northern Territory to collaborate on health. It is encouraging to hear the Commonwealth committing to whatever level of resources is required to try to meet the Indigenous health challenge. The Alliance also challenges the Australian Government to recognise that other well-documented and severe social and health problems in Indigenous communities would be equally unacceptable in a Canberra suburb.

The Alliance is a member of the Close the Gap campaign and attaches a very high priority to achieving an equivalent level of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This will never happen while extremely poor living conditions and shocking behaviour, especially towards children, continue - as has been so graphically reported by Rex Wild and Pat Anderson.

After we have all taken stock of today's shock announcement, the challenge will be to ensure sustained action, including addressing the social and economic determinants of health that underpin good health for all Indigenous people and others currently disadvantaged.

Children must be protected, but the emergency is not confined to child sexual abuse.