

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 17 March 2000

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PARIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT, "TIME RUNNING OUT: SHAPING REGIONAL AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

The following news item on the report is from AAP of 13 March, reprinted from FarmIndex at <http://www.farminindex.com.au/goto.cfm/7554>

Australia risked being divided into two nations if the decline of the bush was not immediately addressed by the federal government, a parliamentary committee found today.

A House of Representatives committee report on regional Australia entitled "Time Running Out: Shaping Regional Australia's Future", urged the government to take urgent action to lead the renewal of declining communities.

"Regional Australia today is lacking in leadership and skills and many basic human resources," committee chairwoman Fran Bailey, of Victoria's Liberal Party, told reporters after tabling the bi-partisan report in parliament.

Throwing money at the bush would not narrow the widening gap in prosperity between metropolitan and regional areas, but cooperation between government, business and communities would turn fortunes around, the committee said.

Investors needed to be given a greater appreciation of regional advantages such as lower transport and set-up costs, committed and stable workforces, lack of congestion, pollution and other urban problems, the report said.

The commonwealth should lead by example by relocating departments into regional areas, starting with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry and Environment Australia, it said.

It also called for the establishment of a National Infrastructure Advisory Committee to connect local, state and federal governments in their approach to boosting the bush.

It highlighted telecommunications as a key driver of regional business growth, but said a lot needed to be done to ensure it could secure a piece of e-commerce opportunities.

"There are two main issues - one is the depletion of skills in human resources and skills within our regional areas and secondly the obstacles to infrastructure

development," Mrs Bailey told parliament.

"It isn't until we manage to start to allow regional communities to reshape and redefine themselves that infrastructure development is really going to flow.

"And the importance of leadership, we have placed a very strong emphasis on that."

The report found a lack of government assistance for rural children forced to live away from home for their schooling a national disgrace. It also urged the federal government to force telephone carriers to provide minimum levels of service to all customers, regardless of whether they lived in the city or the bush. Improvements could be made immediately.

"There are a number of recommendations which could almost overnight improve the lot of people living in regional areas.

"I noted the minister for communications on Sunday actually flagged the desire of the government to improve, for example , the customer service guarantee in regard to communications. There is already a will being expressed."

Labor said people in the bush felt their contributions to the economy were going unrecognised and the report showed the government needed a radical rethink of its approach to regional areas.

"This bi-partisan report shows the government's hands-off approach to regional development has failed to address the challenges facing country people in telecommunications, transport, education and health," Labor's regional affairs spokesman Martin Ferguson said.

Independent MP Peter Andren was sceptical of the government's ability to act on the recommendations, saying previous reports on infrastructure had been gathering dust.

"The whole parliamentary committee system is a huge waste of time and money unless the government responds seriously and quickly to these detailed suggestions to better the lot of rural Australia."

The report itself is available at
<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/rdinq/report/contents.htm>

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From: Steve Douglas <svdougl@facstaff.wisc.edu>
Subject: March Health and Medical Informatics Digest available

March 2000 HMID located at http://144.92.205.41/hmid/2000/3_00hmid.htm

This Issue's Featured Online Links:

- * Report on the Privacy Policies and Practices of Health Web Sites
- * e-Health Ethics Initiative

- * Georgetown Health Privacy Project (HPP)
- * HIPAA Security Summit Guidelines Draft Document
- * CPRI Toolkit: Managing Information Security in Health Care, Version 2
- * Computer-based Patient Records Institute
- * Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information

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VICTORIA RURAL HEALTH WEEK, MAY 2000

Victoria's Rural Health Week is held in the last week of May each year. This year the week falls between May 22-28. This year's focus will be on community health and safety. More information is available at <http://www.curhev.org.au/healthweek.htm>.

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AIHW PUBLICATIONS

Publications from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for March have been

- * Waiting Times for Elective Surgery 1995-96 and 1996-97 (17 March 2000)
- * Palliative Care Information Development (17 March 2000)
- * Institutional Mental Health Services in Australia 1997-98 (9 March 2000)
- * Adoptions Australia 1998-99 (3 March 2000)

Further details available at the AIHW Web site at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

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CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is a forum for the expression of YOUR views. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator, Jim Groves, at grovesc@winshop.com.au.

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.

The e-forum is sent to a mailing list of the Alliance and those have indicated interest through the subscription box at the NRHA Web site (<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>). This issue is going to 665 recipients. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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