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NATIONAL ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS TASKFORCE

The newly-established National Electronic Health Records is seeking submissions on the plan of action to be submitted to Health Ministers in July. Submissions close 21 April. Further information, including an issues paper, is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/healthonline/nehrt.htm>

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ALCOHOL, CRIME AND RURAL YOUTH

The overall the percentage of people in rural and metropolitan areas who verbally or physically abused someone, and damaged or stole property while under the influence of alcohol has not increased, but in in both rural and metropolitan areas there were large increases in driving a motor vehicle and operating hazardous machinery while under the influence of alcohol according to an Australian Institute of Criminology study. The study identified a core group of people who are frequently involved in alcohol related crimes. Details are available at <http://www.aic.gov.au/media/20000409.html>

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FRINGE BENEFITS TAX

The Government and Democrats have reached an agreement on changes to Fringe Benefits Tax. A copy is available from the ACOSS website at <http://www.acoss.org.au/fbt.pdf>.

ACOSS "generally welcomed the agreement", particularly that a \$30,000 cap is more appropriate than \$17,000, delaying the introduction of the FBT changes to April 2001, and the independent inquiry into the definition of charitable, church and non-profit organisations.

However, the Church and Charitable Private Hospitals Association is reported to have expressed disappointment at the deal.

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OVARIAN CANCER

An awareness page for ovarian cancer has been created at <http://ovca.org/>

1 woman in 70, which cannot be described as rare, around 75% of these will be dead within 5 years. It is THE most lethal of all the gynaecologic cancers, and yet so little is known about OvCa. Patients with Ovarian Cancer have the 6th highest risk of death of all cancers. The site aims to help women to recognise the warning signs and obtain appropriate treatment early enough.

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HEALTH CONSUMERS SEEK BETTER INFORMATION: ACCC

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has released a report on private health insurance, concluding that the community seeks better information from hospitals, medical and other health practitioners and health funds about the products or services they provide. The ACCC press release, and a link to the report, is available at <http://www.accc.gov.au/media/mr2000/mr-62-00.htm>

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TELSTRA REVIEW OF CALL ZONES

Telstra has announced a review of its call zoning system, to be concluded by October 2000. Submissions are invited, and will be accepted until end May 2000. Telstra's announcement is at <http://www.telstra.com.au/newsroom/release.cfm?ReleaseID=6001>

Telstra's call zones have been in need of review for many years. A cynic might wonder, however, at the coincidence of the timing of this review with the Government's announcement of a tender for the provision of local calls in extended zones. It is unclear how such a tender can operate while the zones themselves are being reviewed.

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FUEL GRANTS ARRANGEMENTS

The Federal Government has announced a scheme of grant payments of one or two cents per litre to retailers of petrol and diesel in rural and remote areas, to ensure that "the price of fuel need not rise as a result of the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax". Mr Anderson's statement is available at http://www.dotrs.gov.au/media/anders/archive/2000/apr_00/a59_2000.htm

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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 709 recipients. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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