

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 24 November 2001

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### NEW COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTER

The new Minister for Health and Ageing is longstanding Victorian Liberal Senator, Kay Patterson. In announcing the appointment, Prime Minister John Howard said that the change in the portfolio's title reflects the Government's commitment in its third term to more thoroughly address challenges arising from the ageing of Australia's population. The portfolio will gain the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service from the Department of Family and Community Services. Mr Kevin Andrews MP will be appointed as the Minister for Ageing and the Honourable Trish Worth MP will be appointed as Parliamentary Secretary.

Sydney-born but Melbourne-based Senator Patterson is 57 years old, and was elected to the Senate in 1987. She served in the Opposition Shadow Ministry from 1990 to 1996, and as Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and subsequently for Foreign Affairs, but this is her first Ministerial appointment. According to her biography at [http://search.aph.gov.au/search/ParlInfo.ASP?Folder=BIOGS&Criteria=name\\_id:LI4;&action=bookmark](http://search.aph.gov.au/search/ParlInfo.ASP?Folder=BIOGS&Criteria=name_id:LI4;&action=bookmark) her qualifications are in psychology and she worked as an academic at Monash University and the Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences prior to entering Parliament. She was also Visiting Scholar, Gerontology Center, Pennsylvania State University in 1985. Her personal website is at <http://www.senatorpatterson.webcentral.com.au/>

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Working Together Sharing Experiences: A conference focusing on Remote and Indigenous Health

Alice Springs, 4 - 6 of May 2002

Hosted by Centre for Remote Health

A joint centre of Flinders University and Northern Territory University

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[carly.dolinski@flinders.edu.au](mailto:carly.dolinski@flinders.edu.au)

Call for Abstracts:

Further information and submission form can be found on the conference website at

<http://crh.flinders.edu.au/wonca>

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### New Opportunity for Aged Care Boards and Managers

The Australian College of Health Service Executives (ACHSE) with the support of the Australian Nursing Homes and Extended Care Association (ANHECA) and Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA), the peak industry bodies in aged care, has commenced a nation wide program of professional activities for those involved in governance and management of aged care services.

Aged Care Learning and Networking or AcLan follows the recent circulation of two Guides "The Senior Manager" and "The Board" to all age care providers in Australia.

Meetings around Australia have been held in October and November. Aged Care Board Members and Managers have been given wide opportunity to be part of an AcLan group. These will initially focus on identifying professional development needs and opportunities for the sector. Local networks will then address their needs with College support, which includes the presence of trained Facilitators to assist the networks' development.

For further details on AcLan or to purchase copies of the Guides please contact ACHSE at [www.achse.org.au](http://www.achse.org.au) or by telephone (02) 9878 5088.

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### New NACCHO Chairperson

Ms Pat Anderson has been appointed as chairperson of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Rural Doctors Association of Australia President, Dr David Mildenhall, said the appointment will strengthen the body in its work to improve the often shameful health conditions of people in Aboriginal communities. Dr Mildenhall also praised the appointment of Mr Henry Councillor as Deputy Chair of NACCHO: "These appointments will maintain the impetus and strong advocacy role that is the legacy of Ms Anderson's predecessor Puggy Hunter, who died early in September.

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### AMA URGES COUNTRY GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE SUBMISSIONS TO TRADE PRACTICES ACT REVIEW

AMA President, Dr Kerryn Phelps urged organisations and individuals in country Australia to make submissions to the independent Review into the effects of the Trade Practices Act (TPA) on the provision of medical services in regional Australia. The Review was announced by the Prime Minister in August this year following months of lobbying by the AMA and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA).

Dr Phelps said the TPA was having a negative impact on the recruitment and retention of

rural doctors. "Country doctors are under constant fear that time-honoured practices in regard to work rosters, work sharing and negotiations with local hospitals may in some way breach the Act," Dr Phelps said.

"To save their local doctors, country people should contact the Review to report the importance of their doctors to their communities and how the unique characteristics of country life mean doctors must work together to provide services in often difficult and trying conditions," Dr Phelps said.

Submissions to the TPA Review will be accepted up until Friday 7 December and should be sent to:

Mr Terence Barnes  
Assistant Secretary, Financing and Analysis Branch  
Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra  
Telephone: 02 6289 8706  
Fax: 02 6289 3673

The full text of the AMA statement is available at  
<http://domino.ama.com.au/AMASWeb/MediaRel.nsf/Media?OpenView>

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### Cancer death rates falling, survival up

Cancer death rates are continuing to fall, and relative survival rates in the 1990s were much better than a decade earlier, according to two new reports released today from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

"Cancer in Australia 1998" shows that overall cancer mortality rates have been declining at an average of 1.7% per year for men and 1.3% per year for women since 1993. "Cancer Survival in Australia 2001" shows that for men the survival proportion at 5 years after diagnosis increased from 44% to 57% from 1982-86 to 1992-97, while for women the increase was from 55 % to 63%.

Approximately 80,000 new cases of cancer are diagnosed in Australia each year. About 1 in 3 men and 1 in 4 women will develop the disease before the age of 75.

Cancers with the highest relative survival rates for men were testicular cancer (95%), thyroid cancer (95%), and melanoma (90%). In women the highest survival rates were for thyroid cancer (95%), melanoma (95%) and Hodgkin's lymphoma (84%).

Cancers with the lowest 5-year relative survival rates for males and females were pancreatic cancer (5%), lung cancer (11% and 14% respectively), stomach cancer (23% and 25%), and brain cancer (24%).

The Institute media release is available at  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/media/2001/mr011122.html> and the publications are available at  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/can/ca98/index.html> and  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/can/csa01part1/index.html>

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Telstra Consumer Council aims to break down the digital divide

Key representatives from Telstra, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and academia are taking steps towards reducing the "digital divide" by meeting to discuss the problems and potential that new communication technologies offer to consumer organisations and their constituents.

ACOSS President, Andrew McCallum, said it was important for all Australians to be able to participate fully in the knowledge economy as the future of employment and social participation became more and more dependent on universal and affordable access to information technology.

"Consumer groups, the Government and the providers of the technology need to work together to develop strategies to avoid the widening divide between those with access to the benefits of the information revolution and those denied that access because of location, education background or income," said Mr McCallum.

The forum identified the key issues surrounding the use of new communications technology that will provide preliminary input into ACOSS's policy discussion on the digital divide. They included the need for:

- \* a national community networking alliance, given that many different sectors of the community including seniors, women, and people in regional areas face common challenges, including access to relevant online content, skills training and ongoing support
- \* strong on-the-ground collaboration between government, business and community agencies to ensure the successful sustainability of community networking initiatives, particularly community education initiatives utilising video-conferencing
- \* better national data collection on the take-up of information technologies, both by community organisations and end users.

The Telstra statement is available at <http://www.telstra.com.au/newsroom/release.cfm?ReleaseID=17301>

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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](mailto: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](mailto: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 1,169 recipients. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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