

In this issue:

- * NRHA Statement on An Action Plan for Rural and Remote Nursing
- * NRHA Statement on New NRHA Executive
- * NRHA Statement on New Health Care Agreements
- * NRHA Statement on Indemnity
- * NRHA Statement on More National Bodies Admitted to NRHA
- * NRHA Statement on Expanding the Network
- * NRHA Statement that Alliance Promotes Action on Rural and Remote Nursing
- * 7th National Rural Health Conference
- * Rural and Indigenous Health Research Grant
- * PBS changes need to be fairer and better targeted
- * "Major break-through" in regional and remote mental health
- * More Aged Care Scholarships Announced
- * Aboriginal Australia Facing Life Expectancy Crisis
- * Access to International Research for all Australians
- * National Health Survey
- * Contribution and subscription information and disclaimer.

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NRHA STATEMENT ON AN ACTION PLAN FOR RURAL AND REMOTE NURSING

An Action Plan initially focusing on 7 key areas has been developed to address the recruitment and retention of nurses in regional, rural and remote areas, and to help those currently working there with the many professional challenges they face. The full text of the NRHA Statement is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/231002.htm>

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NRHA STATEMENT ON NEW NRHA EXECUTIVE

Dr Nigel Stewart, paediatrician at the Northern Regional Paediatric Unit in Port Augusta, has been re-elected Chairperson of the National Rural Health Alliance. The full text of the Statement is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/2310021.htm>

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NRHA STATEMENT ON NEW HEALTH CARE AGREEMENTS

The National Rural Health Alliance has called on Commonwealth and State Governments to allow further time for public consultation and discussion on the new Australian Health Care Agreements. The full text of the Statement is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/2310022.htm>

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NRHA STATEMENT ON INDEMNITY

At their recent meeting in Canberra, Councillors of the NRHA agreed on the urgent need for governments to find solutions to the indemnity issue affecting doctors and other procedural health workers. The Alliance will therefore scrutinise the package announced by the Prime Minister. The full text of the Alliance Statement is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/2310023.htm>

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NRHA STATEMENT ON MORE NATIONAL BODIES ADMITTED TO NRHA

Three additional national bodies involved in health care in rural and remote areas have been admitted as members of the National Rural Health Alliance. The full text of the Statement is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/2310024.htm>

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NRHA STATEMENT ON EXPANDING THE NETWORK

At its annual CouncilFest in Canberra this week, the Alliance further enhanced its extensive rural and remote health network. The full text of the NRHA Statement is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/2310025.htm>

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NRHA STATEMENT THAT ALLIANCE PROMOTES ACTION ON RURAL AND REMOTE NURSING

The National Rural Health Alliance has this week decided that nursing issues will be the primary focus of its health workforce activity for the next 12-18 months. The full text of the Alliance Statement is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/2310026.htm>

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7th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The 7th National Rural Health Conference is to be held at the Grand Chancellor in Hobart Tasmania from 1 - 4 March 2003. For the first time, online registration for the Conference is now available. The program for the conference is also now available at the Conference website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/seventhconf/seventhconf.htm>

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From: Helen Frazer <h.frazer@qnc.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Rural and Indigenous Health Research Grant

A one-off research grant has been made available to Queensland nurses from funds provided by the Florence Nightingale Committee and the Queensland Nursing Council.

The total amount to be awarded will be \$18,000 for a research proposal that demonstrates

clear links to rural and/or indigenous health.

To be eligible for this grant the applicant must reside in Queensland and be a nurse with an unconditional licence to practise in the state of Queensland.

For an application form, please contact Tricia Mulholland at the Queensland Nursing Council on telephone 3223 5162, or email research@qnc.qld.gov.au

The closing date for applications is Monday, 13 January 2003, and the successful applicant/s will be announced in March 2003.

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Interested in becoming a "friend" of the Alliance? Become more involved with the work of the Alliance by becoming a "friend". "friends" support the Alliance by being an integral part of the Alliance's policy and evaluation process. They also receive other benefits. For more information on membership see <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/friends.htm>

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PBS CHANGES NEED TO BE FAIRER AND BETTER TARGETED

Responding to media speculation that changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme are to be reintroduced into the Parliament, the National Healthcare Alliance resolved to again make itself available for consultation with the government over measures to keep the PBS sustainable, affordable, and accessible for all Australians.

Speaking on behalf of the Alliance, Francis Sullivan said "In making this call, we are reiterating our commitment to operate as a consultative forum and provide the government with a unique opportunity to consult with major stakeholders in Australia's health system. The PBS is not a silo of expense to be taken in isolation from the rest of Australia's healthcare system and the wellbeing of all Australians.

"Changes to co-payments – although rejected by the Parliament last time - should not necessarily be ruled out in principle if a balanced PBS reform package accompanies any proposal for increased charges.

"A reform package must demonstrate fairness, efficiency and effectiveness in the operation of the PBS. This means that if the overall package is equitable and in the interests of the health system as a whole, charges may be increased for some people."

"Obviously, increased charges require a level of compensation for those hardest hit by the changes. Options such as these need to be fully canvassed with the community. The Alliance represents both service deliverers and consumer groups working on a daily basis in the health system. We can provide the government with an ideal opportunity to advance this consultation and test more practical solutions. To date that consultation has not occurred."

The Alliance agrees that the medium term viability of the PBS must be addressed. The solution lies in some combination of increased charges and other measures but the health outcome for all Australians, particularly the sick and those least able to afford increased

charges, must be protected.

National Healthcare Alliance: on behalf of: Association of Independent Retirees, Australian Association of Pathology Practices, Australian Divisions of General Practice, Australian Healthcare Association, Australian Medical Association, Catholic Health Australia, National Rural Health Alliance, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Rural Doctors' Association

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PARTYline is the official newsletter of the National Rural Health Alliance. Keep up to date with rural health policy information and good news stories on living and working in the rural health community. Available online on <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/partyline.htm> or receive a hard copy by emailing michele@ruralhealth.org.au

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"MAJOR BREAK-THROUGH" IN REGIONAL AND REMOTE MENTAL HEALTH

People living in rural and remote areas will be able to talk to a psychiatrist via video link and claim it under Medicare, the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson, has announced. She said the initiative was the first time anywhere in the world that a nationwide, publicly-funded model had used a video link to deliver psychiatric services. "It shines the light for further applications for telemedicine, which could include other specialities that do not require a direct physical examination," Senator Patterson said. The decision to introduce telepsychiatry to the MBS is supported by research, which demonstrates that video consultations are effective in promoting positive outcomes of care for patients. The full text of Senator Patterson's s statement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2002/kp/kp021011a.htm>

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists described the announcement as a ground-breaking development in regional and remote mental health.

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MORE AGED CARE SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

Minister for Ageing, Kevin Andrews, is urging registered aged care nurses in rural and regional areas to apply for the Commonwealth's Aged Care Continuing Professional Development Scholarships. The Commonwealth is providing up to 1000 scholarships - each valued at up to \$10,000 per year - over the next four years. The initiative is worth \$26.3 million and is aimed at attracting aged care nurses and helping those already working in the sector to upgrade their skills.

The Scholarships will be available annually. Applications packs are available from the Royal College of Nursing Australia. Further information is available on 1800 11 66 96 or from their website at <http://www.rcna.org.au>. Applications close on November 15, 2002.

The full text of Mr Andrews' statement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2002/ka/ka02091.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 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.crana.org.au/pandp_psn.html

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Extracts from ABC Health-Updates, October 17 and 24, 2002

Health-Updates is a weekly alert about recent ABC health coverage now available online. Information on how to subscribe can be found at <http://abc.net.au/health/subscribe.htm>

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA FACING LIFE EXPECTANCY CRISIS (The World Today, 16/10/2002)

The appalling differences in life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians has been underscored by the death of a young community leader in North Queensland. The full story is available at <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/s702966.htm>

BUSH MEDICINE (New Dimensions: Health: 15/10/2002)

Australian Aborigines developed an intricate knowledge of the medicinal uses of our native plants. Called bush medicine, or 'jammy', its effectiveness was tried and tested over 40,000 years. But with Aborigines adopting westernised lifestyles, much of that knowledge has been lost. New Dimensions went on a school excursion that's trying to reverse that problem. Full story available at http://abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_health/Transcripts/s701978.htm

DROUGHT (New Dimensions: Health: 15/10/2002)

Droughts traditionally bring depression, suicide and family breakdown. When outback communities were asked what they needed to solve these issues, they put their money into a community-based financial counsellor. And in this drought, said to be the worst since 1902, their ideas are being put to the test. Full story available at http://abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_health/Transcripts/s702001.htm

NURSE PRACTITIONER (New Dimensions: Health: 15/10/2002)

With additional training, nurses in remote and regional areas of New South Wales can now become 'nurse practitioners'. This entitles them to prescribe a limited range of drugs and order some tests. Julie Scott has recently been appointed as a nurse practitioner. She is the first point of call for health care for people in a 50-kilometre radius of Premer and Tambar Springs; towns about an hour and a half's drive west of Tamworth. Full story available at http://abc.net.au/dimensions/dimensions_health/Transcripts/s701989.htm

ELIXIR OF E-HEALTH - Consumer Guide

The Internet is booming as a source of health information. It's fantastically convenient and can lead you to an enormous diversity of resources: from medical dictionaries and scientific journals through to snake-oil sellers, virtual hospitals, and e-mail discussion groups for the world's rarest diseases. But can you trust the information on offer? Health Matters guides you through the online maze. See <http://abc.net.au/health/cguides/elixir.htm>

SUICIDE NUMBERS IN RURAL AUST GROW AS DROUGHT WORSENS (The World Today: 22/10/2002)

Senior representatives from Here for Life, Australia's peak suicide prevention group, have been working the corridors of Parliament House in Canberra today. They have been trying to rustle up funds so they can implement a suicide prevention program in regional Australia. Full story available at <http://abc.net.au/worldtoday/s707981.htm>

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The "Australian Journal of Rural Health" is a refereed journal with a national and international reputation for quality scholarship. Its focus is multi-disciplinary and it includes articles of interest to general practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacists, health administrators, universities and rural health units. Reduced rates apply to members of some organisations. For more information see <http://www.blackwell-science.com/ajr>

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ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson, has launched a national subscription ensuring free access for all Australians to the online library of the Cochrane Collaboration. The Cochrane Collaboration is a highly respected international collaboration of health professionals, consumers and researchers who prepare reports on the evidence about health care interventions. The reports are available through the Cochrane Library, which is currently only accessible by paid subscription.

The National Institute of Clinical Studies has negotiated with the publishers of the library to secure a national Internet subscription which will give the general public access to this important resource from their own computers.

The full text of Senator Patterson's statement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2002/kp/kp021018.htm>

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NATIONAL HEALTH SURVEY

The majority of Australians consider themselves to be in good health. Results of the 2001 National Health Survey (NHS) conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that 82% of people aged 15 years and over considered their overall health to be good, very good or excellent. Similar proportions were reported by males and females and in the previous NHS conducted in 1995.

The Main Features of the publication is available at

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs%40.nsf/b06660592430724fca2568b5007b8619/cac1a34167e36be3ca2568a900139364!OpenDocument>

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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.

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 1,185 recipients. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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