

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 8 November 2002

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LAST CHANCE FOR AGED CARE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Registered aged care nurses in rural and regional areas have just this week left 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.

Applications for the Continuing Professional Development scholarships close on Friday, November 15.

Application packs for the Continuing Professional Development Scholarships are available from the Royal College of Nursing. Further information: 1800 1166 96 or <http://www.rcna.org.au>

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From: Sue Kildea <sue.kildea@uts.edu.au>
Subject: Maternity Care in the Bush Website and Remote Links Forum

The Maternity Care in the Bush Website and the Remote Links Forum aim to decrease the isolation of the remote area health professional involved in the provision of maternity services. The Website and Forum have been developed as a joint venture between the Centre for Family Health and Midwifery, University of Technology Sydney and the Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia (CRANA). A Rural Health Support, Education And Training (RHSET) grant, has funded this venture.

The Website is a hosted page on the CRANA website (www.crana.org.au ? Hosted Pages ? Maternity Care in the Bush) and provides information specific to remote area maternity services including links to national guidelines, clinical issues, current research, articles of interest, resources for parents and other web sites that are relevant to remote area maternity care. The website will have ongoing construction with many more resources still in the planning stage. The Remote Links Forum aims to decrease the isolation of the remote health professional. It is designed to build partnerships between isolated practitioners, for the purpose of support, exchange of information and networking.

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REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INQUIRY

The report of the Commonwealth Government's Regional Telecommunications Inquiry was released on 8 November. The report concludes that the Inquiry "is confident that arrangements that have been put in place over the past five years (including the [earlier] Telecommunications Service Inquiry response), together with commercial developments, and the Inquiry's further recommendations, will create an environment into the future where regional, rural and remote Australians will be able to benefit fully from advances in telecommunications technology and services."

The Inquiry made a number of detailed recommendations to improve telecommunications services. The inquiry's report is available at <http://www.telinquiry.gov.au/rti-report.html>

Not surprisingly, publication of the report sparked a flurry of commentary.

The Federal Government commented that it has made it absolutely clear that it will not proceed with any further sale of Telstra until it is fully satisfied that arrangements are in place to deliver adequate services to all Australians. The Government will consider the findings and recommendations of the RTI as a matter of urgency and provide a comprehensive response to them. The full text of Senator Alston's statement is available at http://www.dcita.gov.au/Article/0,,0_1-2_1-4_112136,00.html

The National Farmers' Federation commented that the report "once again highlights continuing inequalities in the provision of telecommunications services between country and city Australia." The full text of the NFF statement is available at <http://www.nff.org.au/pages/nr02/76.html>

Telstra described the report as an "excellent report card". The Telstra statement is available at <http://www.telstra.com.au/newsroom/release.cfm?ReleaseID=24021>

The Federal Opposition on the other hand described the report as a "whitewash", commenting that "the Inquiry was dominated by two National Party members, and conducted no public hearings. The report has blatantly ignored the bulk of its own submissions with its absurd claims that regional mobile services are adequate, a rise in regional fault levels is reasonable, and regional Internet access is equitable with the cities." The full text of the ALP statement is available at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1102/20002765.html>

[Moderator's Comment: Once again, the issue of rural telecommunications service adequacy is being dominated by the question of Telstra privatisation. The Government's position, which seems to be accepted by others in the debate including the Opposition, that Telstra privatisation should be linked to the current status of telecommunications services in rural and regional Australia is illogical – the relevant question for privatisation is whether privatisation will improve, or detract from, services, but this question is not being considered.]

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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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RURAL DOCTORS WORK LONGER HOURS

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics have revealed that general practitioners in rural and remote areas across the nation are working longer hours than their counterparts in metropolitan areas. The Main Features of the publication is available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs%40.nsf/b06660592430724fca2568b5007b8619/264cda4f25991836ca256c60008008f1!OpenDocument>

AMA President, Dr Kerry Phelps, said that the confirmed doctors are working more hours and the GP workforce is ageing dramatically. Ms Phelps said these two factors contributed to a nation-wide shortage of doctors. The AMA statement is available at <http://domino.ama.com.au/AMASWeb/MediaRel.nsf/a9aea78b666d4f9e4a2569db00831a3c/d99cc5e23cf57f41ca256c62001f9d8e!OpenDocument>

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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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RDAA/ACRRM JOINT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING COMMUNIQUE

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine held successful Annual General Meetings and a joint strategic planning forum in Sydney. Key issues on the agenda included medical indemnity, the impact of the Trade Practices Act, rural after hours, practice financing, recognition of rural medicine as a specialised discipline and the funding and regulation change required to implement the ACRRM professional development program throughout rural and regional Australia. The full communiqué is available at http://www.rdaa.com.au/4_11_02.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 31, 2002

GIANT TENT FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH (The World Today: 29/10/2002)

Many Aboriginal people are reluctant to enter imposing hospital buildings for their health care, so the Aboriginal health service at Broken Hill has decided to build a giant tent to take its services out to the people. <http://abc.net.au/worldtoday/s713937.htm>

REGIONAL AUSTRALIA NEEDS HELPFUL HEALTH PLAN (PM: 25/10/2002)

The drought has caused major social and economic problems in rural Australia this year. A group of 11 university departments, specialising in health, recently gathered to discuss the impact of poor health facilities and funding in regional areas.

<http://abc.net.au/pm/s711401.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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ALGA STATE OF THE REGIONS REPORT

A greater focus was needed on regional development and a stronger role provided for local government if Australia was to overcome growing regional inequality, according to Australian Local Government Association President, Cr John Ross. His comments followed the release of the ALGA-commissioned State of the regions Report for 2002. The report shows that Australia has very few regions that are highly competitive in the modern global economy, and equality of regional incomes has drastically worsened since 1998. The ALGA statement and other information on the report is available at <http://www.alga.com.au>

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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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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 1,183 recipients. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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